PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
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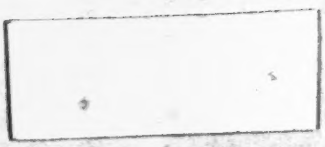
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1992-93

COMPRISING PERIOD
8 June—19 June 1992



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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES VOLUME 209

THIRD VOLUME OF SESSION 1992-93

House of Commons

Monday 8 June 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability Living Allowance

1. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average length of time for processing a disabled living allowance claim; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): Information is not collected in that form, but claims to disability living allowance are now being processed at the rate of nearly 9,000 a week in total, and the figure is steadily rising as staff gain experience with the new system.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my right hon. Friend for that encouraging reply. Can he confirm that disability living allowance ensures that help goes to those who really need it, especially to the severely disabled? Can he confirm that it is the Government's intention to commit more resources to help the disabled?

Mr. Scott: I thank my hon. Friend for those remarks. We are determined to ensure that disability living allowance goes to the maximum number of people entitled to it. I am particularly pleased that we have received 153,000 claims for top-up benefits from people who were receiving mobility allowance or attendance allowance under the old system and who are claiming for the other component under DLA.

Mr. Rooney: Is the Minister aware that, as a consequence of the admirable introduction of disability living allowance, claimants of the old mobility and attendance allowances face delays of up to nine months —I can quote instances since the Minister shakes his head —while their claims are processed, and delays of five months for adjustments such as a change from a day rate to a 24-hour rate of attendance allowance, because of the work load? Is he taking steps to increase the number of staff to process the applications, as far too many are outstanding?

Mr. Scott: All those under the age of 65 who are entitled to attendance allowance or mobility allowance will have been automatically transferred to disability living allowance under the new system. As hundreds of thousands of claims are being processed, I should be surprised if there were not an occasional hiccup or delay. If the hon. Gentleman cares to let me have details of any cases, I shall pass them to the Benefits Agency for urgent attention.

Mr. Thurnham: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government have an excellent record of spending on the long-term sick and disabled? Since 1979, such spending has increased by 168 per cent. in real terms, or £8·7 billion in cash terms.

Mr. Scott: I can certainly confirm that. We are spending nearly £9 billion a year more than was spent under the last Labour Government and we also have a better target system for benefits for disabled people.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Benefits Agency has told me that targets for delivering attendance allowance were not met either in February or in January? Is not failure to deliver benefits on time to the terminally ill a very serious matter and deeply disturbing? What good is financial help that arrives

posthumously? Can he assure the House that the 2,426 claims that he told me about on 1 May have all now been resolved within the Government's targets?

Mr. Scott: I hope so. Obviously we are anxious that claims for the terminally ill, under the special rules, are met urgently. We were not helped by a surge of claims under that rule—90 per cent. of the people who applied were not entitled to the allowance. In practice, that meant that the claims of some of the people who were entitled to it were delayed.

Community Care

2. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has concerning the consistency of payment of community care grants and loans between his Department's offices.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): Social fund officers are provided with a framework of directions and guidance which allows them to meet highest priority needs wherever they occur. No two people's circumstances are precisely the same. That is why exact comparisons are rarely possible and why social fund officers have to use discretion in determining priorities.

Mr. Lloyd: Is not there something ridiculous and outrageous about a local office refusing one of my constituents a grant that he needs to provide furniture to move into ground-floor accommodation because, following a number of heart bypass operations, his health would be put at risk if he were to continue living in upstairs accommodation? Will the Secretary of State make it clear that he totally disapproves of my constituent's life being threatened because the Department's officers will not provide a grant?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman would have been frank with the House had he informed it that the inspector in that case overturned the decision and made the award that the hon. Gentleman wanted. That shows that our system for reviewing such cases works. The hon. Gentleman would have far more cause to complain if inspectors invariably upheld original decisions rather than put them right—as in this case.

Mrs. Roe: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the previous single payment system led to massive abuse and the grossly inequitable distribution of resources? Will he confirm the social fund budget for the current financial year?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is correct. The previous single payment system was unsustainable and unfair. Eighty per cent. of the payment made under it went to 17 per cent. of the recipients, and there were gross variations in different parts of the country. Under the social fund budget, we have been able to make £300 million available in the current year—a 32 per cent. increase on the previous year.

Compensation Recovery Unit

3. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any proposals to reform the compensation recovery unit.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): The compensation recovery unit was set up in 1990. To date it has recovered more than £32 million from negligent employers and other compensators. We have no plans to reform the unit or the scheme as a whole.

Mr. Illsley: Is the Minister aware that the unit is failing to recover the amount projected and that its cost seems by far to outweigh the benefits? Is the Minister further aware that as claimants settle for less than the £2,000 compensation limit, insurance companies are enjoying windfalls because they are not compensating claims at the proper level?

Mr. Burt: The scheme was based on well-established Beveridge principles to which successive Governments have subscribed—such as that there should be no double compensation in accident cases—and on the Public Accounts Committee recommendations, which in 1987 criticised previous arrangements. It is the intention not that moneys should be recovered from individual claimants but that compensators' insurance companies live up to their liabilities. I dispute the hon. Gentleman's remarks concerning the unit's cost-effectiveness. By the end of 1991, its running costs were £3·5 million and its receipts were £15·6 million. Receipts will continue to increase, which will benefit taxpayers as a whole, and individual victims of accidents will not be left any worse off.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Minister aware that the scheme's clawback operation is hitting some people unacceptably hard? When compensation of between £10,000 and £15,000 is granted after a long run in the courts before settlement is reached, the net benefit to the individual may be only £3,000 or £4,000. Surely that was not the Government's intention when they introduced the rules. Can the Minister arrange for them to be reviewed in the light of experience?

Mr. Burt: The hon. Gentleman is correct to say that it was not the intention that the scheme should work in the way that he describes. He and other right hon. and hon. Members do a service in bringing the scheme and its basis to the attention of all involved in personal injury litigation. It is the intention not to recover money from the individual claimant who was the accident victim but to recover it from the insurance company or negligent employer. It is possible for every settlement to take into account the benefits that must be recovered to the state. That is what should occur and if it happens in each and every case, there should be no loss to the individual.

State Pensions

4. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners were receiving state pension in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1991.

Mr. Lilley: Nearly 10 million people received a basic state pension in 1991, as against 8·75 million in 1979. That represents a 14 per cent. increase.

Mr. Field: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his new position. He has been a great friend, whether in his response to Customs and Excise cutters or Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiries. This afternoon, I

invite my right hon. Friend to be a friend to the pensioners who receive a 25p increase on reaching their 80th birthday. Will he ordered a review, because surely the £26 million that that costs would be better spent on pensioners who are truly in need, rather than on the clapped-out doctrine of universality? Such a ministerial review would be just as welcome as the money that is to be paid into the Maxwell pension funds that were plundered by that socialist brigand.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. However, I am afraid that, on this occasion, I have nothing to offer him as good as launching a cutter. Although the 25p increase has been a longstanding arrangement, we have been able to improve the lot of the poorer pensioner by increasing the premiums of income support. In the past three years that has had the effect of increasing by £700 million the amount of money going to less well-off pensioners. I think that that is the way to go.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Does the Secretary of State agree with the principle that men and women should receive the same pension and that they should qualify for it at the same age, as is the European Community's objective?

Mr. Lilley: We accept the objective of equalising the pension age. We have put out a discussion document and that discussion period is due to end at the end of the month. I approach with an open mind all the different options as to how this can be achieved. I should also make it clear, as a number of people imagine that agreement on a particular age will be achieved rapidly and that it will be implemented immediately, that every other movement to an equal age or an equal pivotal age, has taken a very long time to introduce. People of 59 years of age need not think that a change will influence them next year, and the same applies to those who are 64.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the greatest threats to pensioners and their incomes is inflation, which is an indiscriminate and cruel tax? During the last year of the previous Labour Government, inflation ate into almost a quarter of pensioners' real incomes.

Mr. Lilley: That is correct. In fact, in one year, it was more than a quarter, as 27 per cent. of savings were wiped out by inflation. There can be no more cruel or unjust tax than that. By contrast, our record has been exemplary, as we have increased the living standards of pensioners overall. During our period in government, living standards have risen by 34 per cent. in real terms, which is five times as rapid as the rate of increase under the previous Labour Government.

Mr. Allen: May I welcome the Secretary of State to his first Question Time? He has an opportunity that falls to very few men—to make millions of women happy. Will he tell the House, and the millions of female pensioners who are approaching pension age and those who are already drawing their pensions, what his plans are for the pension age for women? Earlier, he said that he had an open mind on that, so will he say whether that open mind includes a pension age for women of 63 or of 65? Many millions of women are anxious to hear his answer and I invite the Secretary of State to reassure them.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman offers something even more enticing than launching cutters. I assure him that I have an open mind which embraces all the options, more than are included in our discussion document. We have outlined a number of options for equalisation at the ages of 60, 63 and 65, and for the periods of retirement at which people would either retire early with a lower rate of pension or later with a higher rate of pension. All the options are being considered. Because we have asked people to tell us their ideas during the discussion period, it would be foolish of me to pre-empt that discussion and the benefits that we will obtain from people's contributions to it by making a premature decision.

Social Fund

5. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to review the present working of the social fund; and if he will make a statement.

6. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total amount made available by his Department in the current financial year for *(a)* social fund loan payments and *(b)* community care grants; and if he will make a statement.

7. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he next expects to meet the Child Poverty Action Group to discuss the social fund.

Mr. Scott: In 1989, we commissioned a major study from the university of York's social policy research unit into the social fund. When considering its report, which will be published shortly, we shall also take into account the recent report of the Social Security Advisory Committee and the views of other bodies, including the Child Poverty Action Group, which is due to meet the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) on 7 July. We all welcome him to the Dispatch Box today.

We routinely monitor the fund. We have made a number of improvements and have injected significant additional resources. This year, we have substantially increased the discretionary budget. We have provided £211 million for loans and £91 million for community care grants. The total discretionary budget of £302 million is almost £75 million higher than the April 1991 figure.

Mr. Cox: I thank the Minister for that reply. However, is he aware of the comments that have already been made by the Campaign for the Homeless and Roofless—CHAR—to which many hon. Members belong? It has said that the present funding and the way in which the scheme works are totally inadequate for people coming out of institutional care or bed-and-breakfast accommodation and trying to build a new life in suitable accommodation. The fund as it now works does not meet their needs. Will the Minister assure the House that those views will be taken into account?

Mr. Scott: Indeed, there is little doubt that they will be taken into account, as I was a founder member of the parliamentary panel for CHAR and last week attended an important seminar close to the House, where the campaign's views were expressed vehemently. Of course I shall take its views into account, but the more dispassionate views of the social policy research unit will also play a part in our thinking.

Mrs. Ewing: In announcing the increase in the discretionary element of that budget, what estimate has the Minister made of the reduction in the number of people who are refused a loan? For example, last year 19,000 people were refused a loan because they were too poor to repay the debt. If we want to target money to the poorest sections of society, we should ensure that those who are most in need are guaranteed some form of assistance. In addition to the reports that the Minister has already mentioned, will he take account of the effective reports by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorites?

Mr. Scott: Of course I shall take account of that. The number of people who are refused because of inability to pay is a mere fraction of the overall number refused. The majority are refused because they do not meet the basic criteria for the fund.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Will the Minister encourage his hon. Friend to take the Secretary of State with him when he meets the Child Poverty Action Group? When he meets it, he will hear that the number of rejections for loans has doubled since 1988 and that the number of rejected community care applications——which are important—now exceeds 70 per cent. Precisely how do the Government intend to respond to the various reports, including that of their advisory committee? In particular, how can the Government justify any social security system that excludes the right of appeal?

Mr. Scott: First, there is a review system within the scheme, which is a speedier and more effective way of handling first-level requests for reconsidering cases. In the longer run, there is the social fund inspectorate. The Social Security Advisory Committee paid tribute to the independence of the social fund inspectorate in its consideration of appeals. We have responded to the increased demands on the social fund by providing the extra resources that I announced earlier. The hon. Gentleman will know that the fund for his local office was increased by nearly 16 per cent. for the current year, so we are responding to pressures on the fund. However, in response to a variety of reports that either have been or will be produced, we shall look again at its future.

Mr. Bowden: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is an element of lottery and luck in whether an application is accepted? If there are pressures on the local social security budget, it depends at what time of year an application is made, and that can vary from one area to another. Will he look at that problem and ensure that it is levelled out between social security areas?

Mr. Scott: In any scheme that depends on discretion there are bound to be differences between offices about apparently similar cases. They may not always be exactly the same. Obviously we are anxious to ensure that pressures on local budgets are dealt with, sometimes within the year, but, more generally, as we deal with the balance between demand and need in our year-on-year allocations.

Mr. Pickles: Given the sort of claims made on the social fund, it is extremely important that decisions are made quickly. Will my right hon. Friend give an undertaking that the present arrangements whereby most decisions are made within a few days will continue? Will he ensure that the position is monitored and that decisions are normally made within a few days, particularly those related to reviews?

Mr. Scott: We are conscious that the social fund meets exceptional needs and circumstances outwith the normal provisions of the social security system. Therefore, we want speedy decisions—those on crisis loans are normally made within 24 hours.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Minister accept that the York university study provides a valuable opportunity to have a fundamental review of how the social fund works? From what he said earlier, am I to understand that that report will be produced before the summer recess and that the Government will give their response to it within that time? Will he consider the recent work done by the Policy Studies Institute that clearly shows that when the social fund was orginally introduced in 1985-86, about 2 million families were dependent on long-term benefits over a substantial period, whereas the most recent figures for 1988 show 4·5 million families in that position?

Mr. Scott: As the hon. Gentleman says, there have been and will be a number of reports and representations on the future of the social fund and the Government want to consider all those once they have been produced. Yes, I would expect the York university report to be available before the summer recess.

Mr. Bradley: Will the Minister be more positive today? I am sure that he is aware that the vast numbers of applications to the social fund are from young and homeless people seeking to set up their first homes and are for household items. Many of those people cannot afford to repay the cost of such items from the meagre income support that the Government give them. Does he support the recommendation of the Social Security Advisory Committee to change the scheme to ensure that non-repayable start-up grants are given to such people? They could then buy essential items such as beds and cookers and would not have to stay in inadequate accommodation. They could set up their first home without the burden of debt that they would incur if they had to use their benefit to buy such items.

Mr. Scott: At the risk of repeating myself, we want to look at all the reports and the various recommendations that they contain. In 44,000 cases people who applied for loans were given community care grants instead.

Pensioners (Christmas Bonus)

8. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the future of the Christmas bonus for pensioners.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe): We have no plans to change the basis for payment of the Christmas bonus for pensioners.

Mr. Atkinson: Can my hon. Friend confirm that, unlike the situation experienced under the last Labour Government, the Christmans bonus will be paid this year? Does she accept that, as the bonus has remained at the same value for so long, it has become increasingly difficult to justify it in cost-effective terms? Therefore, will she seek

to review the value of the bonus with a view either to substantially increasing it or, as I favour, to merge it with a substantially increased state retirement pension?

Miss Widdecombe: I have great pleasure in confirming that the Christmas bonus will be paid this year. The reason that it will be paid is that the Conservative Government made it a statutory entitlement rather than a discretionary payment, thus avoiding for ever the situation that occurred in 1975 and 1976 when, despite the grand promises of the Labour party about what it would do for pensioners, the Labour party did not manage to pay any Christmas bonus for those two years. I well understand what my hon. Friend says about the value of the bonus having declined, but to restore it to its original level would cost £720 million. My hon. Friend should reflect that that equates well with the £700 million per year that the Government have targeted towards poorer pensioners—a better use of resources than the universal uprating of benefit.

Mr. F. Bennett: Does the Minister agree that pensioners have made a magnificent contribution to this country and should be sharing in any increase in prosperity? As the Government have broken the link between pensions and earnings, how are pensioners to enjoy any of the extra prosperity? Is this not a good opportunity for the Government to restore the value of the Christmas bonus?

Miss Widdecombe: Pensioners have enjoyed the benefit of the increased prosperity to such an extent that the value of their total incomes has risen by 34 per cent. under the present Government. Under the last Labour Government, it rose by a mere 3 per cent. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is in the best position to lecture us about helping pensioners to share in prosperity. More pensioners than ever before now own their own homes, have savings in addition to their pensions and have occupational pensions. They are sharing in prosperity—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. This is Question Time—and answer time.

Family Credit

9. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families are expected to gain from the recent reduction in the number of hours that must be worked in order to qualify for family credit.

Mr. Burt: We expect a substantial number of families to gain from the change to family credit introduced in April. So far, around 35,000 families have claimed it as a result of the Government's reducing the minimum number of hours required to 16 per week.

Mr. Hague: Will my hon. Friend confirm that there have been some 2·5 million successful claims for family credit since its introduction in 1988? Is that not an encouraging statistic? The further improvement will be welcomed, because it opens up the benefit to more families on low incomes, while still not creating a disincentive to work.

Mr. Burt: Yes, the change will be widely welcomed, particularly by lone parents. Many lone parents want to work and the change will make it more worth their while to do so. My hon. Friend is also correct in regard to the number of claims, which has increased from some 243,000 —for the equivalent family income supplement—to some 350,000.

Dr. Godman: Will the Minister confirm that the take-up rate for the benefit is only about 50 per cent., although when the benefit was introduced Ministers boasted about a projected 90 per cent. take-up rate? When will the Government improve the rate, or are they content with such an abysmally low figure?

Mr. Burt: In terms of expenditure, the take-up is about 65 per cent. What the Government can boast of is the fact that the amount provided in family credit is about double the amount that was provided in family income supplement. That is all taking place in the context of a social security budget which has increased by 52 per cent. in real terms. That is the extent to which we have improved on anything that the last Labour Government was able to do for people.

Mr. Willetts: Will my hon. Friend confirm that four times more families now receive family credit than received family income supplement in 1979? Does that not represent considerable progress in the reduction of disincentives to work?

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend makes the point very effectively. Those who receive family credit are paid, on average, about £35 per week, whereas the equivalent family income supplement was about £15 per week. We have a great commitment to low-income working families and family credit is the best-known benefit with which we assist them; the success of the scheme over the years shows how important it is to many families.

Mr. Meacher: The recent change involves a huge disincentive to work, because the loss of income support passported benefit—particularly mortgage interest cover —far outweighs any gain in family credit. Does the Minister really consider this an advance? As a result of the change, 80,000 claimants in need will lose free school meals and access to the social fund, and those without children will receive nothing. Is this not yet another own goal by the Government? Short-sighted cuts in public expenditure will serve only to deepen the dependency culture that the Government are supposed to be against.

Mr. Burt: The own goal has been scored by the hon. Gentleman, who has reminded the House of the success of family credit and the fact that more people have been transferred from income support to family credit as a result of the change. Those who previously gained through income support have not lost, because their position has been protected, and the increase in the number who have come on to family credit over the years—far more people receive it than received support through the Labour Government's schemes—shows how popular and effective our scheme has been.

Pensioners (Mortgages)

10. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners are owner-occupiers and have paid off their mortgage.

Miss Widdecombe: I am pleased to tell my hon. Friend that nearly half of all pensioners own their own homes. Ninety-four per cent. of home-owning pensioners have no outstanding mortgage at all.

Mrs. Knight: Will my hon. Friend confirm that nearly all pensioners who own their homes have no mortgages, and therefore possess a valuable asset which gives them extra security in their old age? Would she care to compare provision in this country with that in the rest of Europe? Most British pensioners receive a flat rate, regardless of income, whereas in other European countries low earnings ultimately mean much lower pensions.

Miss Widdecombe: I congratulate my hon. Friend on her question and can indeed confirm that 94 per cent. of pensioners who own their homes have no mortgage. My hon. Friend raises a very important point with regard to the rest of Europe. Despite what is often said by Opposition Members about how good European pensions are, the fact remains that in France and Germany the pension is earnings related, so somebody who has been a low earner will get a low pension. Perhaps even more important, we alone give a woman a pension in her own right.

Maxwell Pensions

11. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the additional cost to date to his Department in connection with the collapse of the Maxwell pension funds.

Mr. Lilley: My Department stands to meet the costs of guaranteed minimum pensions for the 240 Headington plan pensioners who have not been paid their May or June pensions. The amounts payable are currently being assessed.

Mr. Eastham: Does the Minister appreciate the sheer misery of the 32,000 people who have been treated so shabbily? Is it not about time that the Government faced up to their responsibilities? I refer to the behaviour of the Department of Trade and Industry and some of the banks. Is the Minister aware that other companies that have been buying and selling pension schemes ought to be brought to book?

Mr. Lilley: I do indeed recognise the plight of the Maxwell pensioners and will be making a statement after Question Time, if I catch your eye, Madam Speaker. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the numbers involved. As I said in my "Dear colleagues" letter, 35,000 people have pensions or are members of pension funds within the Maxwell group. About 15,000 of those people are guaranteed their pensions by Mirror Group Newspapers. Of the other 20,000, some 9,000 are retired and 11,000 are future pensioners. I mention those figures to give an idea of the scale of the problem.

Mr. Rathbone: What are the Government doing to recoup some of the costs from the Maxwell family and other companies? My constituents and many others are fed up with the way the Maxwell family seems able to go on living some sort of high life elsewhere in the world.

Mr. Lilley: I am certain that my hon. Friend's point will be echoed throughout the House. It is up to the liquidators to trace the assets that have been dissipated, and they will naturally be looking in that quarter as well as others.

Mr. Cryer: In view of the extra cost to the Secretary of State's Department, would it not be prudent for the Department to draw up legislation to stop the stealing of pension funds and their removal from these shores to offshore areas such as Liechtenstein? The Secretary of State may recall that the trend was started many years ago by Duncan Sandys, who shifted money from this country to the Cayman islands——

Madam Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member will not go into too much detail, thus anticipating a statement that is to be made later. I should like a direct question from the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

Mr. Cryer: I started, Madam Speaker, by asking the Secretary of State whether his Department would produce legislation to stop the illegal removal of funds from this country to offshore islands.

Mr. Lilley: Stealing pension funds has always been against the law.

Mr. Stephen: Will my right hon. Friend make it clear to the Governments of Switzerland and Liechtenstein, where much of the pensioners' money has been salted away, that if they want good relations with this country they had better make it clear to their financial institutions, which have profited from dealings with the Maxwell family, that they must meet their legal and moral obligations to the pensioners?

Madam Speaker: Order. That is a most interesting question, but it is totally out of order. Would the Secretary of State like to make some comment?

Mr. Lilley: I am not sure that I can keep my answer in order, but I am sure that my hon. Friend's excellent point will be brought to the attention of the relevant powers. I will ensure that it is.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Secretary of State aware that one of the things about which the Maxwell pensioners action group, which is lobbying today, is deeply aggrieved is that it is having to spend more than £1 million per month on legal and administrative fees to recover the stolen assets? That money cannot be used to pay pensions because, legally, advisers' bills must be settled before any benefit can be distributed. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that those bills include 17·5 per cent. VAT, so the Government are getting their cut from the pensions as well? Will he therefore accept the proposal——

Madam Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this question relates to additional costs to the Minister's Department. It is very narrow and I ask the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) to relate his question to the narrow point of additional costs to the Department.

Mr. Meacher: Does the Secretary of State accept the suggestion that the pension rights should be assigned to him and that he should pay the pensions and then recover the costs by pursuing the banks? If that was right for Barlow Clowes, is it not right for the Maxwell pensioners, who are far more deserving?

Mr. Lilley: I am sure that the hon. Member will have an opportunity to put that question—in order—in response to my statement later this afternoon.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Church Security

28. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what advice is currently being offered by the Commissioners on the matter of security in churches.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): None—the Commissioners are primarily responsible for the financial support of the clergy while responsibility for parish churches rests with the parochial church council and church wardens. However, I can advise the hon. Gentleman that the General Synod's Council for the Care of Churches offers advice on security and has published a booklet entitled "Church Security—A Simple Guide", a copy of which I shall send him.

Mr. Banks: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. I find it peculiarly nasty that people should steal from unattended churches, especially as a number of the stolen artefacts are going abroad. It is a pity that the good Lord cannot look after his own gear a little better—the odd thunderbolt from on high might bring the villains to book. Is it not possible to draw the Commissioners' attention to the need for co-ordinated action across the Church and, indeed, internationally as a number of the artefacts being stolen go abroad?

Mr. Alison: Yes, it is worth investigating whether we can do more to safeguard churches. Local churches could consider an equivalent to the neighbourhood watch scheme. The problem—it is a subtle problem—is that the best way of keeping burglars out of churches might be to get them into churches.

Clergymen

29. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, how many clergymen are *(a)* owners of the parson's freehold and *(b)* licensed priests in charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Alison: As at 31 December 1991, there were some 6,500 rectors and vicars with freehold office and nearly 1,300 priests in charge and team vicars.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend share my concern about the gradual reduction in the number of parsons who own their freehold, and does he agree that the authorities probably intend that that should be so? Does he further agree that we do not want a bunch of vicars who are all yes-men, which we shall have if the freehold is abolished as it appears that it will be?

Mr. Alison: I sympathise with much of my hon. Friend's suggestion about the clause relating to parsons' freehold, although he will understand that the General Synod is considering the terms and conditions of the incumbent's basis of work. Part of the difficulty is that frequent requests have been made by hon. Members on both sides of the House for some way of estimating the productivity of parsons, which can be done only if the freehold is abolished.

30. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, how many Church of England clergy who are not yet retired *(a)* hold the living of their parish with no required retirement age, *(b)* hold the living of their parish, with a required retirement age, *(c)* are not instituted to any benefice, but only to a limited contractual term of office and *(d)* minister by virtue of other arrangements.

Mr. Michael Alison: In the parochial stipendiary ministry, of the the approximate 6,500 vicars and rectors with freehold office, nearly 6,000 must retire no later than age 70, although the pensionable age is 65, whereas the remainder have no required retirment age. There are about 1,200 team rectors and vicars with leasehold office and 2,800 priests in charge, assistant curators and parish deacons.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. I realise that this is a rather technical matter. Would I be right in suggesting that, contrary to the view suggested by the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), it would be cheaper and would offer better value for money—not for individual priests, but the Church of England as a whole—to move to a system whereby everyone has a contractually fixed period, as opposed to the traditional system whereby people are inducted for life and cannot be moved? If so, is that not the right way for the Church of England to proceed so as to avoid unnecessary expenditure based on historical arrangements?

Mr. Alison: I do not honestly think that there would be measurable financial advantage in changing the basis of the freehold purely in terms of the cost of pensions, partly because the flexibility which already exists between the ages of 65 and 70 gives a continuing option to a number of clergy to do what they want and partly because if there were no freeholds the determination of their retirement age would fall entirely into the hands of the bishops who had licensed the clergy. Also, each case for retirement will be determined on its merits, probably with a good deal of flexibility.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Judicial Delays

33. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what efforts his Department is making to reduce court waiting hours.

39. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what action he proposes to reduce delay in civil litigation.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): The Government are currently implementing a programme of reforms in the civil courts designed to meet representations by the civil justice review for reducing delays and costs, promoting simplicity and accessibility, and updating procedures. A number of initiatives are also being taken, aimed at reducing delays and waiting times in the Crown court and the magistrates courts.

Mr. Arnold: I welcome my hon. Friend on his first appearance at the Dispatch Box, especially as I understand that this is the first question answered in the House by the Lord Chancellor's Department and I wish him well in his programme of reforms to which he referred. What progress is being made on the situation in the courts in northern Kent?

Mr. Taylor: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks, which are much appreciated. I will answer his supplementary question in the terms in which it was asked. Cases in the county courts in north Kent—at Dartford, Sittingbourne and Gravesend—are currently heard within 50 working days of being ready for trial at the Medway county court trial centre. I am sure that my hon. Friend, as an assiduous constituency Member, will be keeping an eye on that performance.

Mr. Mackinlay: Why does the Parliamentary Secretary ignore the repeated representations of the Law Society about the chronic delays in the county courts in London and the south-east? Is not the problem the fact that the Government failed properly to fund and resource the county courts following their increased jurisdiction as a result of the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990? Is not the problem further aggravated by the fact that the Government have orchestrated a recession which has caused an enormous growth in debt collection and repossessions through the county courts, in turn leading to a great choking of the system?

Mr. Taylor: No, the answer and the remedy lie elsewhere, in following the recommendations of the civil justice review body. The key to the better dispatch of civil justice lies in matching the nature and weight of the case to the authority of the court to deal with it. There has been a great deal of decanting of court cases from the High Court to the county court and, in particular, to county court centres. The number of trials disposed of in county courts has risen from 9,000 in 1988 to more than 25,000 in 1991 while waiting times have been maintained at an average of 45 days.

Mr. Clappison: Does my hon. Friend agree that improving the administration of both civil and criminal justice is not just a question of increasing resources, which has taken place in the past 12 years with a huge increase in the number of circuit judges and so forth, but a question of setting performance targets for courts so that the public can know which courts are most successful?

Mr. Taylor: Certainly I agree with that. In the Crown court, it is necessary to improve the pre-trial dispatch of business to prevent, wherever possible, cracked trials. The future in the magistrates courts lies in best practice, in the Government's White Paper and in block listing so that everyone does not turn up at 10 am, which means that some people wait until the end of the day.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Minister agree that if one does not provide litigants with legal aid as speedily and appropriately as possible, one builds up a backlog? Does he agree with the Lord Chancellor's circular that the way in which cases are banked up has delayed matters, just as the failure to grant expert witnesses and the failure to grant civil legal aid to most people have done? In all, there is no justice in this country because the Conservative party has sought to destroy the whole litigation system.

Mr. Taylor: That is a fairly sour mouthful to ask me to accept, and I do not accept it. I will say a little more about the circular later.

Criminal Legal Aid

34. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when it is proposed to introduce fixed fees for criminal legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Standard fees have been in operation for some criminal legal aid cases in the Crown court since October 1986. It is proposed to introduce a standard fee system later this year for most criminal legal aid cases heard in the magistrates court. An independent survey is to be conducted to give guidance, not least on the evaluation of standard fees.

Mr. Atkinson: Will my hon. Friend confirm that his Department's decision to introduce fixed fees was arrived at before the recent cases of miscarriage of justice came to light? Will he give an assurance to the House that any recommendation by the royal commissioners against the decision will be immediately honoured?

Mr. Taylor: The proposals for standard fees—I hope that my hon. Friend will not mind if I correct him—were first mooted in 1987 and the Lord Chancellor has said that they will be cost neutral to the profession when they are introduced. I personally share the view that standard fees reward those who can do the work proficiently and with dispatch. The present system of payment by the hour or by the item can fall down by rewarding the slow and inefficient and penalising those who operate concisely, effectively and well. That cannot be in the public interest and it cannot be in the interest of taxpayers. We must remember that in every case, although the taxpayer does not appear as a party on the face of the action, sure enough, the taxpayer is involved.

Mr. Morgan: I congratulate the Parliamentary Secretary on his appearance at the Dispatch Box. Will he confirm that one of the ways in which to defray any additional costs which may arise from the change in the system of reward for criminal investigations could be to reform the green form system of paying legal aid as well, as the present system is wide open to the defrauding of the taxpayer by a small minority of bent solicitors? Does he also agree—this is the Lord Chancellor's responsibility—that the slowness of the investigations branch of the Legal Aid Board and the antiquated nature of the computer is holding up all the fraud squad investigations into the small minority of solicitors who have been exploiting the system in the past few years?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that I was studying his written question on this very subject this morning. There are some 27 cases of fraud on green form and, clearly, that is totally unacceptable. On the other hand, I gather than the hon. Gentleman's complaint related to computer delays may not be found to be substantiated. Certainly, there are cases of fraud and that is quite unacceptable—as, indeed, is the total amount that we are paying on legal aid at the moment. I should like the House to know that gross expenditure on all legal aid was £1·15 billion in 1991-92—a third more than in the previous year and more than twice the gross expenditure four years ago, in 1987-88.

Calder Valley Courthouses

35. **Sir Donald Thompson:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proposals he has to keep two old courthouses in Calder Valley.

Mr. John M. Taylor *rose*—[HON. MEMBERS: "Get on with it."] I apologise for keeping the House waiting.

The Lord Chancellor has received an appeal from Calderdale borough council against the Calderdale magistrates courts committee determination to close two courthouses. No decision has yet been reached.

Sir Donald Thompson: I have invited my hon. Friend to come to Calder Valley with me to look at what is happening there. Does he agree that, although what goes on in a courthouse from day to day has nothing to do with the Member of Parliament concerned, where a courthouse is situated, and who attends it, has everything to do with that Member of Parliament, who is right to use every means available to ensure that that courthouse remains?

Mr. Taylor: I concede the general point and, in particular, I concede that my hon. Friend is an assiduous constituency Member of Parliament. I should tell him and the whole House that magistrates courts can be closed only on a local recommendation of the local magistrates courts committee, and that that decision can be officially opposed only by the local paying authority. Only at that point does the Lord Chancellor have any locus or status in these matters; until then, he does not. The initiation of a closure is local.

Legal Aid

36. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if the Lord Chancellor will withdraw the recent circular sent to justices' clerks concerning the proofs of wages paid or benefits received which are required from claimants before their applications can be considered.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The circular was issued in response to concern expressed by the Public Accounts Committee and other bodies to the effect that the regulations governing the grant of criminal legal aid were not always being properly followed. The circular was not intended to represent any change of policy. The Lord Chancellor and I have already agreed that consideration should be given to altering the regulations. In all the circumstances, and in the light of the widespread concern that has been expressed about paragraph 10 of the circular, the Lord Chancellor and I have decided that paragraph 10 should be withdrawn. A notice to that effect will be issued as soon as possible.

Mr. Byers: I welcome that most constructive reply. Can the Parliamentary Secretary give the House a guarantee that when he considers issuing new guidelines, he will consult all interested parties? We share a common view that we need to achieve value for money, but we also believe that those seeking legal representation should have appropriate legal representation immediately so that they can face the courts. Will the Parliamentary Secretary advise the House today what he would say to a defendant remanded in custody? How would that defendant have access to the 13 weeks pay slips necessary to qualify for legal aid?

Mr. Taylor: What I have just said about the withdrawal of paragraph 10 should have met the critical question with which the hon. Gentleman concluded his inquiry. The whole House should know that, early in April, the Lord Chancellor's Department could not look lightly on the fact that the audit of the Department for last year had been qualified by the Comptroller and Auditor General, and that the Department had been heavily criticised by the Public Accounts Committee. To do nothing to try to tighten up the system would have been a neglect of duty.

Mr. Fraser: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his unique appointment and remind him—I am sure he will follow me—that he owes his first duty to justice and principle, above the interests of party and, incidentally, the Treasury. By withdrawing paragraph 10 of the circular on legal aid, the Minister has made a good start because that paragraph could have caused many injustices, and we are glad that he has withdrawn it. I hope that he will look in a similar light at fixed fees in magistrates courts and perhaps refer that issue to the Royal Commission on criminal justice.

Mr. Taylor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his courteous remarks. I shall, of course, take fully into account the fact that my duty is to the administration of justice. I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments about paragraph 10 and I will bear in mind what he said about standard fees. However, in the spirit of candour that is appropriate in this House, I am bound to say that I am rather attracted by a regime of standard fees.

Industrial Tribunals (Legal Aid)

37. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether he will make legal aid available for claimants in industrial tribunals.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No, Madam Speaker. However, the hon. and learned Gentleman will know that green form advice is available in preparation for tribunals and lay representation is, of course, available in various forms.

Mr. Janner: I, too, congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his appointment. Before he settles too deeply into the Establishment, will he reconsider the issue? However complex, crucial or important a case is to a claimant, surely it is wrong that he or she has no right to legal aid? Will it not get worse when the Government—absolutely rightly—increase the jurisdiction of the tribunals by transferring to them many cases involving contracts of employment and disputes which are at present, wrongly, dealt with by courts?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. and learned Gentleman has a well-merited reputation in industrial law. I remember many years ago listening to instructional tapes recorded by him in an earlier stage of industrial law. However, he would acknowledge that the whole intention of tribunals was to achieve a greater degree of informality than the courts. It is common for both applicants and respondents to present their own cases in those proceedings and there is certainly no requirement for the parties to be legally represented. I remain conscious of the point that the hon. and learned Gentleman argued. However, we must all accept that the public purse is not bottomless and it is unrealistic to think in terms of the legal aid budget growing even faster than it is already.

Pensions Review

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): With permission, Madam Speaker, I would like to make a statement about the framework of law and regulation of occupational pension schemes and about the plight of Maxwell pensioners. Rarely in the catalogue of crime has there been a fraud as callous and despicable as the pillaging of pension funds by Robert Maxwell. It raises two questions. First, how can we minimise the loss and anguish faced by the pensioners? Secondly, how can we ensure that such a crime never recurs?

The whole House will share a deep concern for the distress Maxwell pensioners face as a result of this appalling crime. Unfortunately, it is still not possible to be certain of its full impact on pensioners. At present there is a gap of some £350 million between the assets which remain secure in the various Maxwell pension schemes and common fund and their liabilities to present and future pensioners.

The assets siphoned off through the Maxwell private companies seem to be largely beyond recovery, but over £200 million of assets were given to banks and others as security against loans. It is not yet clear how much of this will eventually be recoverable by the trustees.

Mirror Group Newspapers has agreed to meet the liabilities to its 15,000 pensioners and employee members. Pensioners of Maxwell private companies now in administration have no such security. Most schemes are continuing to pay pension from available assets, but the Headington Pension Plan has not yet been able to pay its 240 pensioners their pensions for May and June. Moreover, the Maxwell Communication Works Scheme has said that from 1 July it will be able to pay some 4,000 of its pensioners only 30 per cent. of their entitlement.

Over the longer term, the priority must be to identify, locate and establish ownership of the stolen assets and secure their return. The liquidators are actively pursuing all legal avenues for the recovery of stolen assets. That will no doubt include appropriate legal action against any members of the Maxwell family or others involved in transactions which may be found to be unlawful.

However, this is not simply a legal issue. Over the years, many financial institutions had dealings with Maxwell companies from which they profited handsomely. Such transactions were perfectly honourable. However, the institutions involved may well feel some moral obligation to assist the pensioners who have so cruelly lost at Maxwell's hands.

Moreover, other financial institutions, too, may recognise the value to them of maintaining faith in the integrity of occupational pension funds. I want to make it possible for them to make some tangible contribution to helping the pensioners defrauded by Robert Maxwell.

Expediting the return of assets and securing contributions from the private sector will be a complex and lengthy process. The Government may be able to give it an impetus. I am therefore immediately setting up a special unit in my Department to take that forward.

The unit will work alongside the trustees and others seeking to secure the return of assets and their equitable distribution between schemes. The unit will do all that it can to speed up the return of assets. The Bank of England supports the foundation of the unit. The unit will also help to set up a trust into which voluntary contributions from the private sector will be paid.

Those steps will help to minimise the shortfall in the long term. But there is a particularly acute problem in the short term. That is not just because the process of identifying, establishing ownership and securing return of assets is an immensely complex and lengthy one. But, of the £230 million of secure assets, some £100 million are locked in the common investment fund since, unfortunately, it has not been settled how they should be allocated between the nine different Maxwell schemes. The trustees and liquidators have now agreed to accept the court ruling on the allocation of assets. But it will take some months before that ruling is given. Meanwhile, those assets are frozen.

No Government could accept a duty to make good losses resulting from fraud or theft of savings. But I do think it right to help to ease the unique short-term pressures that pensioners face while frozen assets are being released and progress is made in restoring and obtaining other funds.

I therefore propose to provide temporary, emergency funding to help Maxwell schemes which are unable to maintain pension payments over the next few months.

The funding that I am making available will amount to £2·5 million in the form of repayable grants. The intention is that the grants should be repaid eventually, provided that the assets of the pension funds are sufficient to permit that without detriment to their members.

There is one final measure which may be of marginal benefit to some Maxwell pension schemes, and that is to bring in regulations to implement the provision of the Social Security Act 1990 which will make any deficiency of pension funds that have to be wound up a debt on the employer company. I shall do that at an early date. It will therefore apply to pension funds of the Maxwell companies. I would not wish to raise the hopes of Maxwell scheme members that they will stand to gain greatly from any pay-out to ordinary creditors of their former Maxwell employer companies which are now in administration. Nevertheless, we are committed to implement that provision and I feel it right to do so now.

The Maxwell fraud is shocking because it is so exceptional. Most private pension schemes have served their members well. They have expanded considerably over the past decade. This Government are committed to reinforce their role. They provide substantial additional benefits to those in retirement, and have contributed significantly to the growth in pensioners' incomes which we have seen over the past decade. More than half of all employees are members of such schemes. We are determined to ensure that their standing is maintained and enhanced, and the security of their members protected.

The Maxwell affair has focused attention on the whole framework of pension scheme law. It has raised questions about issues, many of which may have played no part in that crime, but which none the less need answering. I therefore agree with the Select Committee on Social Security that there should be a thorough review of this area.

I propose accordingly to implement our manifesto pledge by establishing an independent committee with the following terms of reference:

to review the framework of law and regulation within which occupational pension schemes operate, taking into account

the rights and interests of scheme members, pensioners and employers; to consider in particular the status and ownership of occupational pension funds and the accountability and roles of trustees, fund managers, auditors, and pension scheme advisers; and to make recommendations.

I believe that those terms of reference will enable the Committee to consider all the issues raised by the Select Committee in its valuable report. I am pleased that Professor Roy Goode QC, Professor of English Law at Oxford University, has agreed to chair the review. I shall announce the names of members of his committee shortly.

The committee will invite evidence from all interested parties and hold a number of public hearings. I have asked Professor Goode to report within 12 months or earlier if possible. If the committee finds changes which should be initiated urgently I have asked it to report them to me before it concludes its work.

I should emphasise that the committee will not be asked to carry out an investigation of the Maxwell affair. That involves crime and fraud and is rightly being investigated by the Serious Fraud Office.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I have initiated a wide-ranging, open and independent review of pension law. I have taken exceptional steps to ease the acute short-term pressures on some pension schemes and their pensioners. I have established a unit to mobilise support for the pensioners from those in the City who recognise an interest or obligation towards them. I believe these measures are imaginative and responsible. I commend them to the House.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Is the Secretary of State aware that the Opposition welcome the fact that today's lobby by the Maxwell pensioners and tomorrow's Opposition day debate and vote to highlight their plight have finally jolted the Department of Social Security out of its six-month long stupor? This is the first positive action by the Government since the Maxwell scandal broke nine months ago and the Opposition welcome it—as far as it goes.

In essence, the statement tells us few details except that the rescue package of £2·5 million amounts to a derisory 0·5 per cent. of the stolen assets. Why will the package cover fewer than half of the pensioners at risk? Why will not every one of the 12,500 pensioners who have already or are due soon to lose all or a substantial part of their pension receive compensation? Why will not every pensioner who retires in the coming months also be covered? Will the compensation payment top up the pensions of those covered to 100 per cent.? If not, how much will pensioners receive?

What does a few months mean? Does it mean to October, to December, or what? Why is the right hon. Gentleman imposing such a short and arbitrary deadline when the recovery of the assets and any litigation that may ensue may take far longer than that? Is it not clear that the Secretary of State's temporary relief will leave pensioners cruelly exposed long before a final settlement is in place?

Is it not clear that the Government's commitment of some £2·5 million falls far short of the extent of their liability since the Department of Trade and Industry issued a licence under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958 to a private Maxwell company which Robert Maxwell then used as a channel to steal the pensioners' money? Is not the £2·5 million offered in the statement to pensioners insultingly meagre when compared with the £160 million offered to Barlow Clowes shareholders who chose to risk offshore investment in search of speculative profit? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that this finger-in-the-dyke exercise will not do as it bears no relation to the full extent and depth of the Government's moral and legal responsibility in the matter?

We welcome the belated announcement that section 58B of the Social Security Act 1990 will finally, after a delay of two years, be implemented. But will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that that will merely make the pensioners unsecured creditors while other preferential creditors will remain ahead of them in the queue?

On the establishment of a commission to review pension fund law, is he aware that the Opposition have repeatedly asserted that such law should be reformed, and that we regard a year's delay as excessive? Is not there already sufficient understanding of the law's deficiencies, and a consensus as to the remedies, to allow some emergency measures to provide protection this year to every member of an occupational pension fund?

Is the Secretary of State aware of the almost universal support for the establishment of an adequate compensation fund, as already exists in every other major western country?

Following the Barber judgment, which established that pension contributions are deferred pay and are therefore the property of their members, will he accept that European law requires that at least 50 per cent. of trustee places should go to scheme members, employees and pensioners?

Finally, will the Secretary of State accept that there is no need to wait for a year, and risk another pension scandal, to implement the important protections of a compensation fund and a reconstitution of trustee boards? They could and should be done now.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) for his welcome, albeit grudging, of the scheme. He describes the package as derisory. He does not seem to realise that it deals with an acute short-term pressure, unique to this case. It so happens that funds, which have already been discovered in the hands of the central fund, are frozen. We need time for the money to be released and the measure will create time for that and for progress to be made on securing additional funds, which were previously stolen, and contributions from the City.

I am advised that the amount is sufficient to deal with that period when we have acute short-term pressure. The amount will be handled by the unit, probably in negotiation with the most badly affected schemes. It will be up to them to decide how much they top up pensions in the interim, with our help.

Mr. Meacher: What if it takes longer?

Mr. Lilley: I believe that the court will take a matter of months to rule and there is no reason to suppose that the case will take longer. It would be foolish to base our judgment on hypotheses rather than the facts before us.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West is always willing to make lavish promises and has elsewhere promised to bail out all those affected. It is widely recognised that no Government can accept a liability to reimburse all victims of fraud and theft, nor is there any question of Government accepting responsibility.

[Mr. Lilley]

I am glad that the hon. Member for Oldham, West recognises and welcomes our implementation of section 58B of the Social Security Act 1990. I confirm that his interpretation is correct and that, as Parliament decreed in passing that Act, it will make pension funds ordinary creditors of the schemes. That is why I made it clear that one should not place excessive expectations on that.

The hon. Gentleman criticised the 12-month duration of the review as too long. I made it clear that that is the maximum and I have asked the Committee to report in a shorter time if it can and, if it comes across issues on which we should take immediate action, to report while carrying out its inquiry.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West concluded by saying that we should introduce a scheme immediately to provide 50 per cent. employee representation on pension funds. In all of the Maxwell pension funds, 50 per cent. of their trustees were employees. That did not prevent the crisis. None the less, we shall be open to suggestions from Professor Goode's review on anything that should be done in the short term to overcome any problems that he identifies.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Before we proceed, the House will have seen for itself the number of right hon. and hon. Members rising to question the statement. No way can I call them all, so many will be disappointed. I remind the House that we are not having a debate but questioning a statement. I therefore ask right hon. and hon. Members to put one precise question for the Secretary of State to answer precisely. Then we can get through the questions efficiently and properly.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): In contrast to the carping comments by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher)—[HON. MEMBERS: "Question."], I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement, which is almost exactly that for which I and other right hon. and hon. Members have been asking for the past few weeks—especially the short-term relief to pensioners. Does my right hon. Friend agree that his remarks and actions today will allow pressure to be kept on the banks especially to find out exactly where the money has gone? A decision on the final compensation to Maxwell pensioners can then be made on the basis of fact, not emotion, and with proper regard to who is responsible —rather than just relying on taxpayers' money.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments, and I pay tribute to him for the part that he played in pressing the case of Maxwell pensioners. My hon. Friend has undoubtedly helped considerably in bringing about the measures that I was able to announce today.

My hon. Friend is right to emphasise that there is an acute short-term problem, and it is that which the Government have sought to help ease in the first place. He is right also to recognise that the focus is on the financial institutions. It would be wrong for anyone to suggest that the focus should be taken away from them.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Can the Secretary of State give the House an assurance this afternoon that, following his announcement, all Maxwell pensioners will, at least over the next six months, have 100 per cent. of that to which they are entitled?

Mr. Lilley: I very much hope that the fund, in agreement with the trustees of the pension schemes—who have the ultimate responsibility—will be able to make it possible for all the pension schemes to maintain the payment of pensions. But that must be for discussion between them and those who will be arranging the distribution of the grants.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will my right hon. Friend accept the congratulations of the whole House on implementing the all-party recommendations of the Select Committee on Social Security so speedily and efficiently after he entered the Government? Will he confirm that he will take up with the financial institutions the fact that many institutions that go round selling themselves as the smartest banks and financial institutions in the world are suddenly declaring that they were incompetent when it came to assessing whether Mr. Maxwell was honest or otherwise? Will he also confirm——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has asked two questions on my count.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) also played a valuable part in investigating the affair. I agree with him that the onus is on those who had dealings with Maxwell in the past to examine their consciences and to see whether they should share the profits that they made in the past with those who suffered a great loss at the hands of Maxwell.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Does the Secretary of State accept that the House welcomes many of his recommendations today, but is perhaps somewhat surprised at the sum of the compensation—if that is the term—that he is offering at this stage? Can he tell us more about how he arrived at that sum? How was it calculated? Does he believe that it will be adequate to answer the point raised by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood)? Will he give the House an undertaking that, if the trustees report to him that there are not adequate funds, he will come back to the House before the fund is terminated?

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for those remarks and for his earlier ones. I should explain that the money is not compensation. It is designed to ease the acute short-term pressures facing some of the funds and their pensioners. I am advised that the sum should be enough to enable all pension funds to maintain payment of pensions during the months in which we are waiting for the court to make its ruling on the allocation of the frozen funds. During that time, we also hope to make progress on securing the return of stolen assets and on securing contributions from the City. What we cannot do is suggest that the Government offers an open-ended guarantee that would remove pressure on other quarters to contribute. That is an important aspect.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): What is the position of the banks? If the banks advanced money to Maxwell on the security of the assets in the pension funds which were not his to pledge, should they not have the responsibility of returning those assets to the pension funds?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes a powerful point. There is a legal question about the ownership of such assets, but there is also a moral question, which we invite the banks and other financial institutions to answer. I am sure that many will be willing to answer positively.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Minister aware that while the Maxwell clan is still living on the fat of the land, many of the thousands of people that I have met on the Maxwell lobby do not have two ha'pennies to rub together? I have some advice for the Secretary of State regarding the banks. Will he institute the legislation that was used against the miners' funds in 1984, when that money was hunted down in Swiss, Luxembourg and Irish banks? If it was good enough for the National Union of Mineworkers, it should be good enough for Maxwell. The Secretary of State should get the money from the banks and put it into the pockets of the Maxwell pensioners.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman should not think that he is the only person who has sympathy for the Maxwell pensioners. It is precisely because the whole House recognises the acute pressures under which they have been placed that I made my statement today. An array of legal methods is available to the liquidators and they will use those methods vigorously, with the help of the unit that I have established today, to achieve the rapid return of the stolen assets where that is possible.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Does the Secretary of State accept that, while he has advisers to help him, the role of hon. Members is to stand, especially, at the side of those who never worked for Maxwell, but whose pensions went into his hands and out of those of their trustees when they retired? We shall not rest until we know that those pensioners will continue to receive the money on which they retired and on which they expected to live in the same way as other pensioners.

Mr. Lilley: I agree with my hon. Friend. Those pensioners evoke peculiar and extreme sympathy. We wish to see them benefit from the measures that I have undertaken today.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does the Secretary of State accept that it is deeply offensive to the victims of these events to see the continuing millionaire life style of the Maxwell family? Would we be right to come to the conclusion that all those held responsible for plundering the pension funds—it was not Maxwell alone—will be brought to justice?

Mr. Lilley: For almost the first time in my life, I agree with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Bearing in mind the crucial role that the banks can play and the positive contribution that they can make, will my right hon. Friend summon the chairmen of the clearing banks and other suitable financial institutions to tell them that hon. Members on both sides of the House are anxious that they should honour their moral obligations?

Mr. Lilley: I have no doubt that they will be paying close attention to proceedings in the House, but should it be necessary to act as my hon. Friend suggests, I shall, of course, do so. However, I hope that the unit that I have established today will make progress, establish a trust fund and secure contributions.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Is the Secretary of State aware that, as far back as the late 1960s, the Board of Trade produced clear evidence on whether Mr. Maxwell was fit to be in charge of a company? The banks should be told that, as they ignored that evidence, they should return immediately all the assets that they hold, which are not theirs morally or, I suspect, legally.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Lady is quite correct. The Department of Trade and Industry published a report saying that Maxwell was not fit to be in charge of a public company. At that stage, we had no power to disqualify people from being directors as a result of such findings and it was only subsequently that the House took those powers without retrospective effect. None the less, the warning was made in public for all to see and those who dealt with Maxwell did so potentially knowingly.

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement this afternoon, with particular reference to the proposed review of pension law. Has a time limit been imposed on the repayable grant that he outlined?

Mr. Lilley: No, we expect that money to be repaid only if the pension funds found themselves in a position to do so without detriment to their pensioners—in other words, if they were successful in securing the return of stolen assets, in which case the money should be returned to the public purse.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Has the Secretary of State met any of the pensioners who are now lobbying the House? If not, will he arrange to do so? Is he aware that they will be deeply disappointed that he has not gone much further today and that they want a lifebelt which is adequate for its task and will be available until rescue is secured?

Mr. Lilley: Of course I have met Maxwell pensioners and have a considerable number in my constituency. By and large, they will welcome the measures that I have taken today. Naturally, many would like an immediate and overall guarantee, but they recognise that, realistically, no Government could be expected to underwrite all losses made through fraud and theft from savings. They will therefore recognise that the measures that I have outlined offer the best way forward in their difficult plight.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the consequence of what he has announced today is that the Arnold pensioners in Leeds, whose payments have already been stopped, and the Petty pensioners who are threatened with massive reductions in their payments, will now have those made up, pending the resolution of the issues that he has described?

Mr. Lilley: Yes. Our intention is that those funds should be able to resume payment to their pensioners.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Further to the Secretary of State's last response, there is no guarantee that that money will be forthcoming for the Arnold and Petty pensioners because the Secretary of State has already said so in answer to an earlier question. Will he confirm that again? Moreover, will he acknowledge that his statement is a great disappointment to those pensioners who lost their pensions in May this year because of the fraudulent actions of another person? Will he also

[Mr. Derek Fatchett]

acknowledge that his statement has increased their insecurity because they have no guarantee that they will have any rights in the future? The Secretary of State is playing for time with other people's investments and futures.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman is trying to attach a dark cloud to a silver lining. It is clear that the measure is intended to enable the pension funds to resume and maintain their pensions, but we do not offer an unlimited guarantee into the indefinite future. I have made that clear.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): My right hon. Friend has told the House that a unit will look at the institutions in the City but will he go further, in line with what the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was saying, and have that unit examine matters such as buying political influence from the Labour party, buying football clubs and things of that nature? Will the unit be able to look at such fraudulent conversion and try to get money back from those who have it in their bank accounts?

Mr. Lilley: All those who had close dealings with Mr. Maxwell will doubtless be examining their bank accounts.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Is it the Minister's intention that returned stolen assets or contributions to his new trust fund will be tax deductible?

Mr. Lilley: I hope that the trust fund will have charitable status and that no question of taxation would therefore arise.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Will my right hon. Friend elaborate on the future of pension fund trusteeships? Can he reassure the House that the steps that he is now putting in hand will ensure, to the best of the Government's ability, that such a thing can never happen again?

Mr. Lilley: One can never be absolutely certain that one has created a system that is 100 per cent. foolproof against crime. However, we can certainly ensure that such a crime never recurs, and that we have a system of pension fund law and regulation that is up to date, efficient and deals with some of the issues that have been highlighted as the spotlight has played across the spectrum of law and regulation in this sphere, so that people have greater security than in the past. We should not forget that occupational pension funds have been of great benefit to the bulk of their members over the years. We want such pension funds to be of even greater benefit in future.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): While much of the Secretary of State's statement requires digestion, will he now answer one specific question? What is the definition of a Maxwell pensioner? Does it mean someone of normal retirement age or does it refer to the age at which people become eligible for the benefits from the pension scheme? Will he go further than hope that pensioners receive a 100 per cent. payment, and guarantee that they will get a 100 per cent. payment?

Mr. Lilley: If the hon. Gentleman is dealing with complexities of people with the right to early retirement, that must be a matter for discussion with representatives of the individual pension schemes. That is why an across-the-board, 100 per cent. guarantee cannot be given.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Is the Secretary of State aware that many Maxwell pensioners have today expressed great anger at the sight of the Maxwell family continuing to enjoy high living standards, and being involved in the running and setting up of businesses, when many pensioners have been denied the financial security for which they have worked? Is it not time to take action against the Maxwell family to prevent its members continuing their dastardly deeds?

Mr. Lilley: There are deep feelings about that issue among all hon. Members, and a desire to see the appropriate action taken against anyone—whether members of the Maxwell family or others—who have acquired assets illegally and have an obligation to return them to those who have suffered as a result of the depredations on the Maxwell pension fund.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Will the Secretary of State assure the Floform pensioners in my constituency that the £2·5 million grant that he so generously announced this afternoon will be increased if the short-term pressures prove greater than he expects? Does the Secretary of State expect those who have not received pensions for the past two months to start receiving them now?

Mr. Lilley: Certainly, it is our clear intention that those who have not been receiving pension payments should now start doing so, and that those threatened with having them cut off should continue to receive them. I am advised that the £2·5 million is adequate to ensure that we can ease the problems of this unusual short-term period, when hundreds of millions of pounds of assets are frozen and unavailable to the funds. Let us get the matter in perspective: £100 million of frozen funds will be released when the court rules on how that money is to be distributed among the various schemes, and there is no reason to suppose that the court will not rule.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): My right hon. Friend mentioned the Maxwell Communication Works pension fund and the potential difficulties that may be faced after 1 July. Having given his welcome statement on temporary help, can he confirm that those pensions will be paid in full from 1 July and that it is the Government's intention that full payments should continue through the autumn? I am thinking particularly of the Maxwell Communication Works pension fund, which has brought problems to Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire.

Mr. Lilley: It is certainly our intention that those who are not being paid pensions and those threatened with a cut in pensions should receive and maintain pension fund payments. There will have to be discussions between the trustees of those funds and the unit distributing the money to decide how best to operate the scheme and the precise amount to be paid out in the light of the trustees' long-term position.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): What advice is the Governor of the Bank of England offering to the banks that are effectively in possession of stolen property? Will the Secretary of State support the Select Committee in efforts to reinvestigate the affair and recall those two crooks the Maxwell brothers to answer questions, so that

if the brothers do not do so, they can be brought to the Bar of the House and, if necessary, put behind bars where they belong?

Mr. Lilley: The Governor of the Bank of England fully supports the unit that I have established today. A Select Committee would have to be re-established before it could consider who to interview or reinterview, which would be a matter for it, not me.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if a regulatory failure has occurred, substantially more responsibility must be placed on the pensions industry as a whole? Given that the industry has assets of some £300 billion, and that many of the participating funds are in surplus, a swift contribution to the trust fund is surely in its own best interests.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend has made a good point. There are many precedents for members of an industry —in their own interests—to take action to ensure that that industry ranks high in the faith of the public, and maintains a good public reputation. I am sure that the pension fund industry will want its reputation to remain as good as it always has been, and should be. One way to secure that reputation is to ensure that the plight of the Maxwell pensioners is considerably eased, and I very much hope that the industry will be able to contribute to the fund.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): The Secretary of State has made it clear that whether 100 per cent. of the pensions that Maxwell pensioners currently expect is paid to those pensioners will be up to individual pension funds and their trustees. Will he make it clear to those trustees that the Government intend pensioners to receive 100 per cent.? If the funds that he has announced today are not sufficient to enable that to happen, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that sufficient funds are made available for pensions to be maintained at the level expected by these innocent people before they learnt of Maxwell's crime?

Mr. Lilley: I have made it clear that the Government cannot underwrite 100 per cent. pension payments indefinitely. We have made available a fund that will enable the restoration and maintenance of pensions that have been cut during the period concerned, or cuts which have been threatened. It will, however, be up to the trustees and those who handle the money that I have made available to decide how it should best be allocated during a period in which we are subject to acute pressures and are waiting for a much larger sum to be released. I hope that much more money will come from the City, and from the return of stolen assets.

That is the long-term solution. People should not expect the action that I have announced—action to deal with the short-term pressures—to resolve the long-term problem; that will be done through the return of stolen assets, and the securing of contributions to the trust fund from those who feel obliged and willing to contribute.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): Does not my right hon. Friend's statement constitute the first public recognition that the Government have a role to play in these matters? That is very welcome.

Does not the onus now lie on the banks? This is not their money, or Maxwell's money; it is the pensioners' money, and honour and justice dictate that the banks should do something about it.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I believe that that is where attention will now be focused, and rightly so. I hope that we shall succeed in mobilising resources as a result of the establishment of the unit and the trust, and that those resources will be channelled to mitigate the long-term pain and anguish of the Maxwell pensioners.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does the Secretary of State accept that the legal framework, and lack of regulation, allowed this robbery to take place? Does he accept that 12 months is far too long to wait for the report, before which no legislation can be introduced? We need far more urgent legislation which can make the pensioners and the contributors the sole controllers of pension funds—rather than putting them in the control of crooked millionaires who seek to invest in their own companies for their own benefit.

Mr. Lilley: The basic cause of crime is criminals, and in this case we happen to know who the principal criminal was—Robert Maxwell. We want to ensure that the legal and regulatory framework make it as difficult as possible for criminals to commit crimes in the future, and, if that is to be achieved, a review must be undertaken and must examine all the questions thoroughly. That was advised unanimously by those on the Select Committee, of which I thought the hon. Gentleman was a member. I have taken the Committee's advice, and I consider it wise and sensible to adopt that approach rather than to introduce immediate, off-the-cuff legislation without proper preparation.

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): I congratulate the Secretary of State on his announcement, and particularly on ensuring that the pensions law review will consider not only the current defects in the law, but instances in which the existing law is satisfactory but is not being properly administered and enforced. That seems to me to be an essential part of the work of the review. Can my right hon. Friend also confirm that the review will take into account the ownership of surpluses, where those exist?

Mr. Lilley: Yes, I can confirm the latter point. The review will be able to consider the ownership of surpluses and assets of the fund. I thought it right that the terms of reference should be wide rather than narrow and permit the review to investigate all the issues that have been raised in recent months, as people have considered what is or is not satisfactory in the law and regulation of pension funds. The terms of reference are not artificially restrictive; they enable the review to go about its business without being artificially hampered.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Does the Secretary of State not accept that one of the worst problems for pensioners is the anxiety that they have had to endure for the last seven months about what is happening? Can he say how soon he expects the money to be returned by the banks and others and how soon he can give all pensioners in the schemes a guarantee that they will get 100 per cent. of their pension?

Mr. Lilley: I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman that the problem is made far worse by the uncertainty which is inherent in the problems that Maxwell left behind him, but unfortunately the business of securing the return of assets and of other contributions is a process. It is not something that will suddenly be over at a point in time. The only step in that direction will be the release of the £100 million of frozen assets, once the court has ruled how that money should be distributed among the schemes. That I expect in a comparatively few months, but it is up to the court to determine how long it should take in making that ruling.

Foreign Affairs Council

4.16 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the special meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council in Oslo on 4 June which I attended to discuss the outcome of the Danish referendum on the treaty of Maastricht.

At the meeting, the Foreign Minister of Denmark, Mr. Ellemann-Jensen, explained that the Danish Government needed time to consider their response to the referendum. The Danish Government wished to keep all options open, with the aim of agreeing a way forward acceptable to all Twelve member states. He was not seeking a renegotiation of the treaty of Maastricht, because he did not believe that this would be agreed by other member states. In this, as the discussion showed, he was right.

I made it clear that the Government respected the outcome of the referendum as the democratically expressed view of the Danish people, as provided for in the Danish constitution. I added that the concerns of the Danish people against centralisation were reflected in this country, too, and that we would not be prepared to join any attempt to coerce the Danes. There were lessons for us all to consider. The Maastricht treaty had, however, been signed by all member states. Like other Community Governments, we believed it right, as the Prime Minister said to the House on 3 June, to continue with the process of ratification. It was agreed that the door should be left open for Denmark.

After discussion the Council agreed a short statement of conclusions, which has been placed in the Library of the House. The House will have an opportunity to debate the implications before proceeding with the Committee stage of the Bill. Meanwhile, the varied work of the Community will continue—with Denmark, of course, as a full member.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): After listening to the Foreign Secretary, the House will be no clearer about the situation following the Danish referendum. It is all very well for the European Community Foreign Ministers to say that they wish to proceed with ratification of the present text of the Maastricht treaty, but will the Foreign Secretary explain the point of that when the treaty cannot be operative unless all the Twelve ratify it and when the Danish people have just voted not to ratify it? It does not seem to me that either the European Community Ministers or the Government here have come to grips with the real situation which faces the Community and the House.

The right hon. Gentleman rightly says that there are lessons for us all in the referendum, but the question is whether the Government have learnt those lessons. The British Government showed the Danes the way by opting out of major provisions of the Maastricht treaty. The Danes have simply followed that approach to its logical conclusion by deciding to opt out of the whole treaty. Labour would want to see the whole treaty enacted.

The Government should take this opportunity to remedy their damaging precedent by reconsidering the treaty. The United Kingdom should opt back into the social chapter and press for suitable convergence conditions for economic and monetary union, including anti-unemployment policies, strong regional policies and

constructive industrial restructuring policies. That is the sensible and constructive way forward, if only the Government had the good sense to grasp it.

Meanwhile, will the Foreign Secretary tell the House the Government's intentions for the European Communities (Amendment) Bill? It is only right to tell him the Labour party's intentions. At 7.30 am last Wednesday, the right hon. Gentleman told radio listeners that the Government intended to proceed that day with the Bill's Committee stage. A few hours later, the Government changed their mind and abandoned the Committee stage. Let me make it clear that we would regard it as improper for the House to be asked to debate and approve legislation enacting into United Kingdom law a treaty that is inherently faulty as a result of the Danish referendum.

We ask, as soon as possible, for the report to the House, for which we asked last week, and for the debate on that report, which the right hon. Gentleman promised. If the report shows a clear way ahead which would allow the House to consider the Bill sensibly, well and good. If the Government are not able to offer that clear way ahead, the Labour party will oppose any further consideration of the Bill and will vote accordingly.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman did his best, but the intellectual confusion on which he rested his case was apparent. He clambered about trying to decide which intellectual fence to sit on.

The right hon. Gentleman is also getting very inaccurate in his old age. He will not find that I said anything in my radio broadcast last Wednesday about proceeding with the Bill. He will not find any way in which he can distinguish what I said in the morning from what the Prime Minister said in the afternoon. There is a very good reason for that: we are in the habit of concerting our pronouncements pretty closely, and we did so on this occasion. Both of us said that we would proceed, as the Prime Minister said again, but neither of us gave a date on which we would do so.

The right hon. Gentleman asked a more serious question about ratification—an entirely worthwhile question. *[Interruption.]* I have to pick them out, Madam Speaker. The 12 member states signed the treaty of Maastricht and then went their ways, according to their separate procedures, to seek ratification. One member state has had the reverse, in the Danish referendum, in doing that. The Danes came to us on Thursday and asked for time, making it clear that, from their point of view, all options were open. They are clearly entitled to time. I am very much against any effort to slam the door against them. They are entitled to time as members and in accordance with the treaty. Equally, other countries are entitled to continue with their ratification procedures. It is clear that this treaty cannot come into effect until all 12 members have ratified it.

The right hon. Gentleman finally asked about procedures in the House. They are not essentially a matter for me, but, in answer to the Leader of the Opposition on Wednesday, the Prime Minister made it clear that we were inclined to accept—and did accept—the case for having a general debate on the implications of the Danish referendum before we discussed the Bill in Committee. We stand by that, but the timing of the debate needs to be discussed through the usual channels.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Whether the Maastricht treaty is eventually renegotiated or unbundled, or merely stays the same, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is vital in the coming months to reinterpret the treaty in a way that gives maximum emphasis to the aims expressed by the excellent determination of our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that it should be a treaty to reverse the move towards centralisation in the affairs of the Community? Does he accept that some items in and aspects of the treaty do that, although there are also aspects which do not? In the coming months, will he undertake, with his colleagues and with our support, to give maximum intellectual vigour to the drive to reinterpret the way forward for Europe towards decentralisation rather than centralisation?

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend has, not for the first time, got the analysis exactly right. Long before the Danish referendum we said that Britain wanted a Europe wider in membership and more decentralising in operation than at the moment. There is no happy status quo in the present stage, as anyone can judge who considers the present controversies over the Single European Act. We are clear in our minds that we are more likely to get that wider and more decentralised Europe on the basis of the treaty of Maastricht than in the confusion which would follow if it were destroyed. That is a matter of judgment for the House and elsewhere, but we believe that, in the confusion which might follow the collapse of the treaty, we might find it impossible to get any agreement on enlargement, which is one of the main objectives of this country, or on decentralisation.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Does the Secretary of State agree that the Liberal Democrats have always favoured a federal, decentralised, democratic European Community? To put matters in proportion, at the previous general election we won nearly 2 million more votes than the population of Denmark. Does he agree that we are entitled to be heard——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has a right to be heard.

Sir Russell Johnston: Does he agree—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I need to hear the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Russell Johnston: Millions of people outside the House and many hon. Members want a coherent, effective, democratic European Community and are appalled by the rise of dead-end nationalism.

Mr. Hurd: There appears to be some difficulty about the geographical place that the hon. Gentleman is now occupying with regard to the House's attention, but that is not his fault. I think that he will agree that the voters in Denmark have given politicians a kick in the pants. People always enjoy that because our profession is not especially popular, but once that has happened, politicians must get on with their job, remembering why they were kicked in the pants. We must proceed, and that is what we intend to do.

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I am very conscious that he had a distinguished role outside politics as a novelist and as a

[Mr. John Biffen]

one-time career diplomat which has enabled him to understand both English and Euro-speak? That ability is not given to us all.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary apparently made encouraging noises in Oslo to the Danes about the virtues of decentralisation in the developing Community. Is he aware that it was reported in *The Times* today that Chancellor Kohl has said that, once the Danish hiccup is out of the way, there will be an acceleration of European integration? May we have an assessment of the situation in plain-speak?

Mr. Hurd: I have tried to give such an assessment. It is not only in Oslo that we have argued against the centralising tendency of the Community. My right hon. Friend knows well that we have done so—that I have done so—for many months now. As my right hon. Friend said, that is our purpose. The question before the House in the European Communities (Amendment) Bill and before Europe more generally is whether that purpose is best served with or without the treaty of Maastricht.

On Wednesday, my right hon. Friend put to the Prime Minister—he had a good deal of support in the House for doing so—a proposition about renegotiation. He said that now, after the Danish result, was the time to seek to renegotiate the treaty so that we should end up with fewer powers for the Commission and the court and with, basically, a free-trade area with the single market. However, the very statement attributed to the Federal Chancellor shows the difficulty of that path, as the Prime Minister said in reply.

If one seeks to reopen in renegotiation the whole treaty of Maastricht, one does not achieve, I assure my right hon. Friend, an agreement on a free-trade area, a single market and some intergovernmental co-operation. One achieves immediately the putting forward again of all the centralising arguments which we successfully pushed out of the way at Maastricht. That is what would happen. The discussions I had at Oslo clearly confirmed that from a number of quarters, as does the report to which my right hon. Friend referred. That is the difficulty of proceeding as he wants.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Further to the point made by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), is it not clear that the part of the Maastricht treaty which amends the European Communities Act 1972 cannot proceed until and unless the Danish people change their minds? On that point, therefore, it is right to say that it is dead. On the other part of Maastricht—on the so-called "pillars" and on the intergovernmental treaties dealing with foreign policy and home affairs—no such restraint exists. It does not require the unanimous agreement of the Twelve.

Given the Government's view about economic and monetary union—they have not, of course opted in because they have grave doubts about that—and given their enthusiasm for intergovernmental arrangements, is it not obvious that the Government should now accept with equanimity the failure to enact the part of the treaty which amends the European Communities Act and that they should go ahead as far as they can with the other parts of the treaty which require no such procedure?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman has not got it exactly right. The economic and monetary union proposals in the treaty of Maastricht do not involve, as I understand it, an amendment to the treaty of Rome. They are treaty proposals, but they do not involve an amendment to the treaty of Rome. That is one reason, although not the only reason, why I am a bit reluctant to see the unbundling of the treaty of Maastricht, which is what the right hon. Gentleman proposes. It is being discussed, as the right hon. Gentleman has discussed it, but I do not think that it would be an easy task on which to reach agreement. Nor is it what the Danish Government have asked for.

The Danish Government's request was not for renegotiation, as I said in my statement, nor for taking apart the treaty of union to look at which bits they could accept without a further referendum and which bits they could not. Their proposition was simply that they should have time while they considered all the options open to them. It was reasonable, therefore, at Oslo to say that, as that was their request, that is what should be accorded.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, although technically there are ways of proceeding towards ratification without Denmark, they will be rejected by Her Majesty's Government, as will any moves to pressurise the Danes to reverse their position? Surely what we now have is a breathing space in which we can consolidate the position won by my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary at Maastricht as the best way forward for the enlargement of the Community. What we do not now want is a fresh start to the negotiations.

Mr. Hurd: We should be very reluctant to go along with any answer to the problem of the Danish referendum that lost the prospect of enlargement; I made that point clear in an earlier answer. My hon. Friend is entirely right. What the Danes asked for seemed to be, in the circumstances, the right request and they were granted that request. They were entirely entitled to that, and that enables us to think the question through and produce an answer which I hope can be agreed to by all 12 countries.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): No one in Scotland would recognise the present Government as a Government wholly committed to decentralisation, but is the Secretary of State aware that, although many of us understand the suspicions that led the Danes to do what they did, we fear that they may have done terrible damage to the interests of small nations? Will the Government therefore continue to press for a fairer and more democratic Europe, and will the Conservatives resist the temptation to revert to type as the party of little Englanders?

Mr. Hurd: I am certainly against any effort in Europe to say that, because Denmark is a small country, it is of no account. The Danes have their rights, they have exercised their rights and, for my part, a lot of the discussion in Oslo on Friday was designed to ensure that we did not appear to neglect that fact.

Mr. Kenneth Baker (Mole Valley): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best parts of Maastricht are those that require no modification to the treaty at all—agreement on intergovernmental co-operation on justice and internal matters, foreign affairs and defence? May I

express the hope that the Government proceed with that on the basis of agreement between Governments? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the rest of the Maastricht treaty was very much on the basis of a Community of 12, and not of 11 plus one, and, if he has difficulties with the word "renegotiation", will he accept that there would have to be substantial changes and modifications to the treaty before the House could give its approval?

Mr. Hurd: I think that my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) answered that question skilfully. People in Denmark and in this House are concerned not so much about what is in the treaty of Maastricht as about how that treaty would in practice operate, in the light of our experience of the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act. We need to find a way of dealing not just with the treaty of Maastricht but with all the texts on the basis of which we operate, to improve matters and to make it clear to our constituents and others in the Community that matters will improve. That is the process that my right hon. Friend and I were discussing, and we must consider how best to push it forward.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does the Foreign Secretary accept that the lessons to be learnt from this episode are that the centre cannot steamroller naturally small communities, be they the Danes or anyone else; that long-term political stability and unity can be built only when the diversity of cultures and aspirations within Europe is recognised; that that principle is just as valid for countries such as Wales, Scotland and other national communities within Europe as it is for the Danes; and that no long-term future for Europe can be achieved if there is a cobbling together of aspirations by the 50 million club at the expense of communities of 5 million?

Mr. Hurd: At the moment we are a Community of 12 democratic states each operating under its own rule of law, and that means that changes do not take place smoothly. On many occasions in the past the Community has come to a halt—a temporary stop—while difficulties of this kind have been dealt with. The Single European Act was held up for many months because of a difficulty in the Irish courts. That happens, and it is part of the nature and diversity of the Community. It is a Community of democracies. They have to follow their own procedures and we have to respect them.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Will my right hon. Friend say something about the Government's policy when we assume the presidency next month? Would it not be wise to concentrate on matters that would allow us to enlarge the Community to include the EFTA countries and eastern European countries in due course and establish our policy accordingly? Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is a growing distaste for what many people see as the federalising influence of Mr. Delors and the European Commission which should be denied?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend. Our objectives in the presidency have been spelt out to the House. They are the completion of the single market and carrying forward from the present presidency the discussion about financial arrangements, something which will clearly continue to be necessary. They also include setting the pace for enlargement. That may well be more difficult as a result of the Danish referendum. However, we will have to press ahead with that as far, and as fast, as we can. I agree with that. I also agree that it is very important that the Commission should follow up what its President has said, and whose words I quoted to the House, about the great importance not just of having an article about subsidiarity in the new treaty, but of ensuring that the practice of the Commission and the other Community institutions follows that course.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): Has the Secretary of State seen the suggestion that the 11 countries could abrogate their responsibilities in the treaty of Rome, incorporate the provisions of that treaty into the Maastricht treaty and then, as 11, ratify the Maastricht treaty? Does he agree that such a stratagem contains distant echoes of those European countries with written constitutions which tend to tear them up when those constitutions are inconvenient and replace them with new and more malleable constitutions? Will he assure the House that the Government would not be part of such a stratagem?

Mr. Hurd: I find that option very unattractive. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) referred to a possible unrolling of the treaty and taking parts out which could be dealt with intergovernmentally. Obviously, that is an option, but it is perhaps more difficult than the right hon. Gentleman described. However, the idea of turning the whole treaty by way of lawyers' changes into a treaty which only 11 could sign, and going ahead on that basis, is not something that we could accept.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): My right hon. Friend may recall that I was the first Conservative Member to congratulate him on his tremendous work in negotiating the Maastricht treaty. I am sorry that by signing early-day motion 174 it appears that I may have given him a kick up the pants. There are as many interpretations of our intentions in signing that early-day motion as there are of the treaty itself. The Danish referendum has shown that in this country——

Madam Speaker: Order. What I said about the previous statement applies to this statement: there should be one question to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the British people are concerned that the Danish have spoken out with great concern about the interpretation of the treaty? Many of us will find it very difficult to support the continuing ratification process without a much clearer explanation of what the treaty actually means.

Mr. Hurd: I understand my hon. Friend's point, and he put it in an extremely useful way. We will do our best to meet it, and the undertaking of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the Leader of the Opposition does that in part.

I was wrong to say earlier that EMU is entirely freestanding of the treaty of Rome. It could be isolated from amendment of the treaty of Rome, but that would be a difficult job.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): As the Maastricht agreement is, at present, effectively null and void in that it no longer attracts the support of all the 12 Community nations, will the Secretary of State assure the House that he will not proceed with the Committee stage of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill until there is a new accord between Denmark and the other 11 nations?

Mr. Hurd: No. I think that my undertaking and that of the Prime Minister are clear enough. The Maastricht treaty has never been anything except null and void: it has not yet come into effect. We are talking about the procedures which each nation state is taking to achieve ratification. The Danes have asked for time about that for reasons which are clear enough to everyone. We will have to judge carefully how precisely and with what timing that relates to proceedings in this House.

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there are many advantages for Britain from Maastricht that Britain would want to keep? Would we not have a better chance of keeping them if Brussels was to give a slightly better demonstration of the working of subsidiarity? That means appearing slightly less to interfere and perhaps considering the return of some powers to sovereign Governments.

Mr. Hurd: I agree with the first part of what my hon. Friend said. In general terms, statements from Brussels are clear enough. In particular terms, they sometimes contradict the general statements.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Does the Foreign Secretary recognise that the Ministers he met in Oslo are an increasingly unrepresentative elite who want to go further and faster in a direction that most people do not want to go? What Europe needs now is a large dose of democracy and people power. The people of Denmark have spoken. Should not the British people have the same opportunity?

Mr. Hurd: I have nothing to add to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said on that point last week.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): If the Maastricht treaty is not ratified by 12 member states, is it not lifeless and dead? If it is dead, what on earth is the point of going through a ratification process with the other 11 member states if that is only to pretend that it has life? Is there not a better case for renegotiating the treaty to lose its federalism and centralising element so that it can have the support of member states and then be properly ratified?

Mr. Hurd: I tried to answer that point earlier. That is not what would happen. If we simply said that we intend to call for the renegotiation of the treaty, all the centralising proposals that we batted away and got rid of with great difficulty during the autumn and winter would return. Instead of negotiating an agreement on the kind of Europe that my hon. and learned Friend would like, we would be back in the maelstrom. I do not think that that is in the interests of this country.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. We now move to the Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

[Relevant documents: European Community Documents Nos. 10229/91, relating to the Common Fisheries Policy, 5088/92, relating to a quality policy for fishery products, 5210/92, relating to monitoring implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy, 5337/92, relating to discarding of fish in Community Fisheries and 5351/92+ ADD 1, relating to the common organisation of the market in fishery products.]

Madam Speaker: Before I call the Minister of State to move the Second Reading, I must inform the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond).

4.47 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

There are two big issues in fisheries policy. The first is the conservation of fish stocks; the second is the structure and capacity of the fleet. They are, of course, linked, but they are not interchangeable.

The need for conservation is addressed by technical measures such as mesh size, the kind of gear used and how it is rigged. However, technical conservation poses real problems of surveillance. There is cheating and far too much discarding. There is therefore a need to deal not just with the size of fish taken out of the seas, but to limit the number of fish removed. Quotas control only what is landed. The overwhelming need is to reduce total fish mortality. Hence the necessary complement of technical conservation is effort control. That is what the Bill is about.

The second problem is fleet structure. That problem is tackled by decommissioning and measures to tax the aggregation of capacity. It is also tackled by measures to permit more economic operation of the industry by introducing a greater element of market forces—notably by means of the trade in licences.

Underpinning both aspects of policy is the licensing of vessels. There is no point in curbing fishing activity by over-10 m boats if the under-10 m fleet can simply expand without real check. That is why, despite the heavy administrative and manpower costs involved, I have accepted the argument of the fishing organisations that licensing should extend to the entire fleet. That will give us a valuable new instrument of management, which is essential if we are to make effort control and decommissioning work for the benefit of the industry.

There is a parallel approach, which is tackling the effort and the capacity. That parallel approach is at the heart of the Government's policy. It translates into five related groups of actions. They depend both on Community and unilateral decision making, so it is entirely right that this debate should cover wider Community fishing policy as well as the specific and limited question concerned with the Second Reading.

Those five elements are decommissioning, improving the operation of market forces, the extension of licensing, technical conservation, and effort control. Many details,

notably the details involved in decommissioning and in effort control, are subject to consultation. That consultation remains entirely valid, because all that the Bill does is to empower fisheries Ministers to attach a condition to a licence. The details of that are still subject to consultation, which is an extremely valuable exercise for fisheries departments. Indeed, I extended the period so that the organisations had time to call their members together to give a considered response.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Minister suggests that he is merely empowering, but it is a major power being put into the hands of the Executive. If the Bill is passed, what arrangements will be made to allow the House properly to consider any condition that the Minister would wish to attach to a licence before the conditions became current?

Mr. Curry: I will reflect on the hon. Gentleman's point. He will be aware that the conditions currently attached to licences, which are fixed from time to time, are not debated in the House. He will also be aware that 3,800 vessels will have licence conditions attached to them. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not wish to debate the fate of 3,800 vessels. However, he may remain confident that the consultation exercise with the industry is of great importance and is essential to the effective working of the measure.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Will my hon. Friend confirm that there will be no follow-up by way of detailed regulations—that he may use that power by imposing conditions on licences, but that it will not be like the normal procedures of the House whereby an enabling Bill is followed by detailed regulations to implement a power?

Mr. Curry: The power that the Bill would confer would enable fisheries Ministers to attach further conditions to a licence. My hon. Friend will know from his experience in the fisheries sector and from his constituency interest that a licence already bears a significant weight of conditions to it. Indeed, that is one of the principal instruments of control. The European Community is looking to provide some overall framework on a Community level so that we can have more discipline relating to licences. My hon. Friend is correct in his surmise that that power would enable me to make conditions which would be issued to each vessel in the over-10 m fleet and would then condition the days at sea on which it operated.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford) *rose*——

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North) *rose*——

Mr. Curry: I will give way, but the House wishes me to make progress.

Mr. Taylor: On giving such powers to the Minister and how they will be implemented in practice, what role will the House have in approving new regulations? For example, with the limit on the days of fishing, at what stage will the House have a say if that limit is introduced?

Mr. Curry: The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that, in the whole fisheries sector, limits are imposed by means of regulations which come from Brussels or from the House. The purpose of bringing the measure to the House is that, although one could look to Brussels to provide the power to make such an attachment, I would prefer to have the powers directly from the House so that Ministers may be responsible for the decisions that they take. That seems entirely reasonable.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Minister clarify what he means by licence conditions? He almost gave the impression—I assume that he did not mean to do so—that there would be different days-at-sea regulations or limits for each vessel. Presumably he was saying that they would apply to all vessels, not boat by boat.

Mr. Curry: I shall refer to the details in a while, but it is certainly not our intention to apply a flat rate condition which is identical for every boat. One of the reasons is that we may face the possibility of segmented multi-annual guidance programme targets from the European Community which would vary according to the type of fishery. We therefore have to maintain flexibility to be able to relate the days at sea in a subsequent phase to the actual fisheries in which we find ourselves involved.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Curry: I will give way once more on this point and then I must make progress. We have not yet discussed the details of effort control.

Mr. Foulkes: I agree with the Minister on flexibility. Will he give an assurance that such flexibility will include taking account of the fact that Clyde fishermen already do not fish at the weekend and that conservation is therefore being practised by Clyde fishermen?

Mr. Curry: I should make it absolutely clear that our intention is to apply the possibilities with maximum flexibility. The 135-day limit already applies to about 450 boats, unless they have the gear option. We shall be looking to be more flexible in the way the limit is applied. I would not wish to take into account merely what the hon. Gentleman has said. Certain fishing communities—because of religious conviction, for example—refrain from fishing on certain occasions. I wish to be able to take that point into consideration by introducing maximum flexibility. I recognise the particular character of the fishing industry and it is not our intention to cut across it.

I shall now deal with the vessel decommissioning scheme because it is part of the twin policies and we should look at matters in the round. As the House will know, fisheries Ministers are prepared to make up to £25 million available for a cash-limited decommissioning scheme to help the industry to bring effort and capacity more into balance with fish stocks. The scheme will aim to target fishing effort, which is defined as days at sea in 1991 multiplied by vessel capacity units, to get the best value for public money. Only seaworthy vessels over 10 m holding valid fishing licences will be eligible to apply. The licences will be permanently extinguished before any grant is paid. Given the criticisms of decommissioning which have been levelled in the past, it is important to make it absolutely clear that when a boat is decommissioned that boat ceases to be part of the licensed fleet. There can be no equivocation about that. To stop idle vessels being reintroduced for the sake of decommissioning grant, we have suggested that only vessels which fished for 100 days in 1991 and in subsequent years should be eligible. The grant may not be paid on vessels which have changed ownership after 1 January 1992.

[Mr. Curry]

Community regulations currently require decommissioning grant at a standard rate per tonne. We are pressing the Commission to propose an amendment to the Council regulation which would give us more flexibility to get better value for money. Departments are also considering whether the rate of grant should be determined by tender. That would be one way of getting more value for money. No decommissioning money will be paid until effort control and reduction arrangements are in place. Subject to those arrangements, payments will run over two financial years: 1993-94 and 1994-95.

The second leg of the policy is to improve the operation of market forces. We are keen to allow the industry greater flexibility to manage quotas and to use market forces to rationalise its operations. For instance, we are aware of concern about restrictions placed on quota swaps by producer organisations and we propose to lift those restrictions. The greater flexibility should enable the industry to maximise quota uptake and make annual end of year reallocations of quotas unnecessary. As the House will know, towards the end of autumn every year fisheries departments usually redistribute unused quota between the producer organisations. A mechanism will be provided whereby the organisations can redistribute the quotas, so the market and not the Ministry will deal with the problem.

We also propose to introduce further flexibility by changing the method of calculating quota allocations to allow producer organisations to buy out the track records of member vessels. This will allow producer organisation members to benefit from the removal of old, inefficient vessels.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Curry: I will give way after the next two paragraphs.

The industry also needs to be able to transfer and aggregate licences. The existing rules already allow that, but they have introduced new penalties—20 per cent. for aggregation and transfers. We have consulted the industry and in the light of its comments we shall be prepared to make adjustments. I hope that the industry will fully exploit that liberalisation. The more we can get from liberalisation and decommissioning, the less dependent we shall be on effort control, so I hope that the industry will look to the market force element as well as to decommissioning to obtain the maximum from the policy. It obviously makes sense to do so.

Mr. Salmond: Will the Minister explain why he made the decommissioning scheme—which has general support in the House although there is disappointment at the level of funding—contingent on acceptance of his pet project of transferable quotas, which is extremely controversial in the fishing industry? Why was not decommissioning of capacity allowed to stand in its own right?

Mr. Curry: The proposal before the House is not for individual transferable quotas in the sense in which they operate in places such as Iceland and New Zealand. It is a limited introduction of transferability and market forces. It is not ITQs as they operate in some other fisheries. The hon. Gentleman should also bear in mind that producer organisations have said that they would like greater flexibility. I appreciate that it depends which producer organisation one consults. In Scotland the producer organisations play a particularly important role in the industry.

Transferable quotas are not my pet project. However, it is clear that market forces should play a greater role in the industry. My proposal is something which the industry has said that it wants in order to make the system more efficient.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I wish to pursue this point. I find the Minister's terminology a little disturbing when he talks about old, clapped-out vessels. If the effect of market forces is essentially to close down a fishing industry in one community and allow the quota to disappear into one where fishing is more powerful and capital intensive, is that an acceptable price to pay?

Mr. Curry: If I were introducing absolutely freely tradeable quotas so that, for instance, quotas from the north-east coast of Scotland could be bought by Humberside or vice versa, I might appreciate the hon. Gentleman's anxiety. But we are talking about trading within the producer organisations. No one will be obliged to sell. No one will compel people to sell. We are introducing what the producer organisations have asked for.

I will try to get through another chunk, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and move to the third leg of the policy, which is the extension of restrictive licensing to vessels under 10 metres. The whole House will welcome it because the fishing industry asked for it. I was initially reluctant because of some of the administrative and manpower effort that would be involved, but I was convinced that it was the right policy. Therefore, we intend to implement licensing of, in effect, the whole fleet.

The 10 m and under-10 m fleet has expanded. We have seen the development of so-called "rule beaters"—vessels constructed by the building yards within 1 mm of whatever set of rules happens to apply. It is important that the benefits of effort control and decommissioning are not undermined by further expansion in the sector. The extension of restrictive licensing will therefore apply to all vessels fishing for profit from 1 January 1993. That will be done by means of a statutory instrument which will of, course, be placed before the House.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I apologise for interrupting my hon. Friend and thank him for his courtesy in giving way. His responses are most helpful in this type of debate. Will he make the position clear on the under-10 m vessels? Is he saying by implication that the days-at-sea regulations will apply to under-10 m vessels —the inshore fleet—or does the Bill provide that the regulations can so apply at some time in the future? His answer is important.

Mr. Curry: My hon. Friend asked three questions and I shall be precise in my reply. The Bill gives me the power to extend days at sea to the under-10 m fleet, but I do not intend to do so unless it proves necessary because we must build up the information about the behaviour of the under-10 m fleet.

There are two reasons for licensing. The first is to put a ring fence round the industry. That will prevent the effort expanding and people bumping out of the over-10 m fleet

into the under-10 m fleet. The second reason is to enable us to build up information. I make it clear that at present we do not intend to apply either decommissioning or effort control to the under-10 m fleet.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Will my hon. Friend be kind enough to expand on that? Will licensing be extended to pot fishing for lobster and crab? As he knows, on occasions I have brought delegations of people worried about the amateur nature of such fishing and the unmarked buoys for pots around the south coast which lead to an enormous number of yachts getting ropes around their propellers as well as great antagonism among professional fishermen.

Mr. Curry: The possibility of applying the rules to all vessels licensed within the fleet will exist, but it would be physically impossible, even if I wished to do so, to extend the provisions to a further 7,000 vessels in addition to the 3,800 vessels to which the rules will already apply. The smaller vessels can therefore rest certain that we have neither the means nor the inclination to extend the effort control provisions to vessels below 10 m. Virtually everyone demanded that we should extend licensing to create an effective licensing system which applied to the whole fleet. That part of the package has been widely welcomed.

I must also make it clear that the licence for vessels under 10 m will be a simple permit to fish. We do not intend that such licences will have the complexity of licences for the more powerful fishing vessels, which differentiate between stocks and so on. Of course, the licences will be subject to prohibition orders. We intend to monitor fishing activity data through a sampling regime and may introduce additional controls if they are justified.

To allow market forces to operate more effectively, the new licences will be tradeable between vessels but only within the under-10 m category. The aim is to include all genuine fishermen, but not to give potentially valuable licences to non-fishermen, so we shall ask for evidence of fishing for profit in 1991. We shall give careful consideration to difficult cases such as people who have entered into a financial commitment to buy a vessel—the so-called pipeline cases—or people with replacement vessels. Where there is an obvious wrinkle, we shall be flexible and sensible so as not to exclude people who find themselves in genuine difficulty.

The technical conservation measures, as the House will know, are rules on the type of gear that fishermen can use. They are essential especially to ensure that juvenile fish can escape capture and survive to maturity and reasonable, marketable size. I pay tribute to the pioneering work that the United Kingdom industry has done to popularise some technical conservation measures and, for example, its work on trialling, which has been an extremely useful collaboration. There is certainly a long way still to go on technical conservation. We have a significant agenda which we should like to see accepted at European level. We shall continue to work closely with the industry.

We have agreed significant new Community measures, which came into force on 1 June. They include an increase in the minimum mesh size in the North sea and west of Scotland to 100 mm, with the option to use a square mesh panel of 90 mm. That represents the first Community recognition of the importance of square mesh panels on a Community-wide basis. We have also increased the minimum mesh size to 80 mm in the Irish sea, as the industry wanted, and introduced a uniform mesh size of 40 mm for pelagic species.

The measures also include a restriction on the use of grading machines to reduce waste of fish by discarding and restrictions on the length of drift nets to 2·5 km in most cases for European Community vessels, wherever they fish, to prevent the development of practices which have done so much harm in the south Pacific and elsewhere.

For practical reasons, a decision was taken last month to defer bringing a few of the new rules into force until January 1993 so as to allow fishermen time to acquire new gear not immediately available on the market. Some United Kingdom fishermen will be helped by that sensible adjustment of the plans.

Mr. Foulkes: The Minister has received representations from the Scottish Fishermen's Federation to delay the one-net rule until January next year. I understand that when members of the federation met officials they were told that there could not be a delay and they want to meet with the Minister and the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. Has the Minister agreed to that meeting and what consideration is he giving to their representations?

Mr. Curry: I know that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, who is sitting beside me, has met Scottish fishermen to discuss the issue and I know that he intends to cover the matter in his reply to the debate.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Salmond: Would it be——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. To which hon. Gentleman is the Minister giving way? It is not clear.

Mr. Curry: Perhaps I should give the other one a chance, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Campbell: I am grateful for the Minister's felicitous reference to me as "the other one". The one-net rule is of particular significance in those ports which have concentrated on prawn fishing. In my constituency, fishermen are concerned that the one-net rule may have significant consequences for the future of the fishing industry in East Neuk in Fife. There is anxiety that the imposition of the one-net rule may drive those who concentrate on prawn fishing to seek white fish as an alternative, which appears to run contrary to the type of conservation measures to which the Minister has referred.

Mr. Curry: I know that the industry was anxious to have a one-net rule and we would like one to be more generalised throughout the European Community. The problem in Scotland is that the fishing industry was concerned about discards in the nephrops fisheries. I know that the industry has made representations to my hon. Friend and he has heard what they have had to say. The Community rule can be altered only by Community agreement, but my hon. Friend intends to deal with that subject when he winds up. I shall allow one more intervention; then I must get on.

Mr. Salmond: In fairness to fishing organisations, can the Minister confirm that support for the one-net rule has been contingent on by-catch changes to allow it to operate effectively? Given that it is being imposed as a unilateral measure, does he accept that there is nothing to stop the

[Mr. Salmond]

Government attempting to get an agreement to the by-catch changes throughout Europe before the one-net rule is imposed on 1 January next year?

Mr. Curry: We have to be careful that the changes in the rules do not undermine the essential conservation purpose of the measure. In answer to the last three interventions, I said that the measure has been mentioned by Scottish fishermen to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland He has been listening to what they have said and he will answer the hon. Gentleman's question when he concludes the debate.

I was about to tackle the unilateral measures. Following consultation with the industry, we introduced further national measures. They include restoring the minimum landing size for whiting to 27 cms because the Community had reduced it to 23 cms. I was delighted to be able to announce that the Irish Government had simultaneously introduced the 27 cm minimum landing size for whiting in their fishery. I had discussions with the Irish Minister on Friday about how we could co-operate further in the Irish sea, as it is a vunerable stretch of water and it would make a great deal of sense if we could introduce maximum co-operation in the way in which it is managed.

We have introduced a one-net rule for all licensed vessels. We also introduced compulsory square mesh panels in the Irish sea and south-west of Scotland, where the minimum mesh size is 80 mm. We imposed the square mesh panel on all United Kingdom nephrops fisheries and the package includes anti-ballooning provisions. We have also introduced a ban on twin and multi-rig trawls in all nephrops fisheries except the Fladen ground. There has been a significant advance in technical conservation measures, which form an essential piece of the panoply of fisheries measures.

We regard effort control as essential if we are to tackle the fundamental problem of fishing mortality. We need to take new direct measures to control and reduce fishing effort. That is the only part of the package which requires primary legislation. We have the power to do everything else, which is why other measures do not feature in the Bill. It is an essential part because there will be no decoupling between it and the decommissioning scheme.

We plan to freeze fishing effort for all vessels of more than 10 m at the 1991 level in 1993, with the option of reducing it in the years after that. The size of reduction will depend on the sort of multi-annual guidance programme targets and how they are defined in Brussels, on the final outcome of those negotiations and on the impact of other measures in the package. We believe that the only practical way to control fishing effort is to control the time that vessels spend at sea. The existing licensing provisions in the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1967 already allow us to limit time spent fishing, but it is simply not possible to monitor how much fishing takes place during each trip. Clause 1(2) and 1(3) of the Bill will enable Ministers to restrict the time that licensed vessels spend at sea by imposing a new condition in sea fishing licences. It will also enable them to determine, by way of licence conditions, what time at sea will mean. Our intention is to restrict days at sea and the licence conditions will set down how they will be defined, notified and controlled.

The Bill also contains a number of other measures which will ensure that the new time-at-sea restrictions can be properly enforced and that the penalties for not observing licence limitations and conditions act as real deterrents to would-be offenders. It will give us broader powers to require information from fishermen by enabling us to require the provision of non-statistical information. For the first time, it enables us to say in what form we require the information and does the same in relation to trans-shipment licences. The provision will enable us to ensure that we have all the information necessary to enforce the new time-at-sea restrictions.

The Bill also allows Ministers to revoke or to suspend licences when licence limitations and conditions, including time-at-sea restrictions, are breached. Clause 2(3) does the same in relation to trans-shipment licences. The provision will for the first time enable Ministers to withdraw or suspend licences as a penalty. We shall no longer be dependent on long-drawn-out court proceedings and inadequate fines to stop or deter over-fishing. We shall be able to take action once a breach has taken place and consider revoking as well as suspending licences. We need severe penalties when fish conservation is at stake.

When I visit fishing communities I am frequently asked when I shall be able to impose some real penalties. Far too often, fishermen seem to get off extremely lightly when convicted of a fishing offence, and the fine is a fraction of the profit gained from the infringement.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mr. Curry: I have one more clause to deal with and then I shall give way.

The Bill increases the maximum penalty on summary conviction for breach of a licence condition from £5,000 to £50,000. That will bring the maximum penalty for breaching a time-at-sea restriction into line with the maximum penalty for fishing without a licence or exceeding quota limits.

The Bill will come into force one month after Royal Assent. It applies in Northern Ireland and may be applied in the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man by Order in Council.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Curry: I shall give way to those hon. Members who wish to intervene.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It would help enormously if the Minister would say which hon. Gentleman he is giving way to because four seem to wish to intervene.

Mr. Curry: I intended to continue my generosity by giving way to all of them, but I will start with the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace).

Mr. Wallace: I am grateful to the Minister. He is being generous and it is helpful to the debate if we may clarify matters. He said that the Bill will provide definitions as to what constitutes a day at sea. The Minister must be aware of the concern that vessels are counted as spending days at sea if they are returning to a home port having discharged their fish or travelling to a port for repairs. Is he minded to make special provision to cover those situations? The proposed restrictions have given rise to much ill feeling in the industry.

Mr. Curry: We have to accommodate a whole series of conditions. We must decide how to deal with the case that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. That is one purpose of the consultation. We must deal also with vessels which have already been affected by a tie-up in 1991, or which have taken the gear option. How are we to accommodate those circumstances in the days-at-sea rule? We must take into account also vessels which opt to tie up at an overseas port, because under Community rules we cannot oblige them to tie up in a British port. We must establish a track record for vessels in certain classes which are fishing for non-TAC stocks. It is not part of my purpose to gloss over the difficulties of the exercise, but we have consulted and we are collecting information to work out the most sensible way of overcoming some of the difficulties that we shall encounter.

I repeat that it is not our purpose to apply the rules unreasonably, or in a way that is more restrictive than necessary. It is not our purpose either to deprive fishermen of legitimate days at sea, but to establish a genuine track record when they are involved in fishing. We will go to great lengths to get that right.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): My hon. Friend indicated the need for effort control in this country. Can he say why our Community partners do not feel that the same need exists in their countries?

Mr. Curry: It is by no means clear that our Community partners will not feel that way. We all face multi-annual guidance programme targets, and we do not yet know what they will be. We have not received any official notification of the latest proposed targets. The Dutch operate effort controls covering virtually the whole of their fleet. That measure was recommended by the Advisory Committee for Fisheries Management of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea. If TACs and quotas do not work, there must be some limitation on effort.

The body which governs New England fisheries is also examining the possibility of introducing effort control. On Friday, I was speaking to my French opposite number, who said that if France is confronted by a MAGP target of a certain size it will have to consider effort control. We are introducing it because we believe that it will provide us with the flexibility to apply targets that are best suited to British fisheries. It is certainly possible that other Community members will want to go down the same route. The Dutch have already led the way in respect of virtually the whole of their fishery.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Has the Minister's attention been drawn to the hostility of fishermen in the north of England, particularly in relation to the days-at-sea provision? They say that if a proper decommissioning scheme had been introduced and adequately funded, the new provisions would not be necessary. The fishermen argue, "Why should a farmer have set-aside money for setting aside his land when a fisherman is not given set-aside money for decommissioning his boat?" What is the reason for the Government's inconsistency?

Mr. Curry: There is a great difference between the two. A farmer who is told to set aside land—the Community now has what is in practice a compulsory set-aside scheme —is being told that he may not use the land that is his own asset to produce that which we know he could have produced had he used that land. The fisherman is not being told that he may not catch his quota: the purpose of the measure is not to prevent him doing so out of a common resource. That is the difference between the two.

How many hundreds of millions of pounds would the hon. Gentleman have us spend on a decommissioning scheme? The French Government have just spent £15 million—somewhat less than we plan to spend on a decommissioning scheme. They say that there is no possibility of yet another decommissioning scheme, and that other methods would have to be used. Decommissioning is a necessary element in the programme, but it will not by itself deliver.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): I want to press my hon. Friend on the important question of the equivalent action which may or may not be taken by our Community partners. I represent a constituency in the south-west which is vulnerable to the fishing activities of certain of our Community partners. We are worried that Britain could be taking what could prove, in certain circumstances, very restrictive action, but that no comparable action will be taken by our partners. What tangible evidence can I offer my fishermen in Looe or Polperro that we are not alone in taking action to introduce a package of conservation measures throughout the Community?

Mr. Curry: My hon. Friend can tell them two things. He can say that we are doing this because the United Kingdom has the biggest investment of all the Community fishing countries in the health of the stock, and to protect the futures of British fishermen catching British stocks. We have 89 per cent. of the haddock, and 46 per cent. of the cod. It is our stocks that are at risk, so it is essential that we preserve them.

My hon. Friend can tell his fishermen also that other countries will have to decide how to meet their MAGP targets. We want ours defined in terms of fishing effort because we think that that will give us greater flexibility. I believe that other countries will find themselves moving in the same direction. A number of Ministers told me that decommissioning can only go some of the way. If the Community's proposed targets are eventually agreed, I can think of no country that could meet them by decommissioning alone. I am sure that that will be understood by our fishermen.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): The Minister indicated that the Bill applies to Northern Ireland. Has he entered into full and proper consultation with fish producers in Northern Ireland? If so, how did they react? They are totally opposed to the broad concept of the Bill.

Every time the Minister is pressed to answer a question, he does so with a latitude that is not contained in the Bill. We must deal with the legislation that is before us. For example, 1991 will serve as the base year for the days-at-sea rule. Will the Minister clearly indicate what latitude he will give in variations from the norm in respect of any particular vessel? I understood the Minister to say that the rule will be applied on a vessel-to-vessel basis. Will he give a firm undertaking that variations from the 1991 norm will be taken into account?

Mr. Curry: Let me reassure the hon. Gentleman. We chose 1991 as the base because that is the year for the next phase of the MAGP targets. However, I made it clear that

[Mr. Curry]

if, for example, a fisherman was affected by circumstances beyond his control in 1991—such as breakdowns—we would take them into consideration. It is not our intention that 1991 should be treated in every single respect with absolute biblical certainty in respect of days at sea. Where a case is shown for flexibility, we will allow it.

Perhaps I should make it clear that it is our intention to establish an appeals procedure so that fishermen can explain the reasons for an unusually low track record in 1991, where this was due to circumstances beyond their control. The appeals tribunal will be independent of MAFF officials and will be able to advise Ministers that they should make an adjustment to the recommended days at sea.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I pick up the points made by my hon. Friends the Members for Wyre (Mr. Mans) and for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) in contrasting the situation in this country with that in the rest of the Community. The Minister's contention is that other countries—he quoted France—will have to consider effort control along those lines. He said that in France, for example, only a £15 million decommissioning scheme had been proposed. I wonder whether my hon. Friend is being entirely fair. Several other countries in the European Community are relying much more heavily on decommissioning schemes than either France or ourselves.

Mr. Curry: Let me be clear. I thought that the House was anxious to pursue the principles of subsidiarity, by which I mean that we should be able to implement, by methods that are most appropriate to our conditions, general rules laid down by Brussels. Therefore, it is perfectly sensible that we should apply measures that are most appropriate to our fisheries and conserve our stocks for our fishermen. It is our stocks and our industry which are at risk, and the essential purpose is to conserve them.

Everyone will receive a MAGP target and nobody will be able to escape it. They will all have to meet it. Some countries have already had a decommissioning scheme. The French scheme has finished—it took about 75,000 kilowatts out of the French fleet, and that is reckoned to be equivalent to about 7·5 per cent. We aim that our decommissioning scheme will take upwards of 5 per cent. out of our fleet, depending on whether we can apply it with the type of flexibility that we want.

It will be for other member states to decide how they meet the target. We have decided that the best interests of conservation are served by meeting the target through a mixture of decommissioning, technical conservation and this Bill.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby) *rose*——

Mr. Curry: I shall give way just one more time because I am in danger of beating the record of giving way in the course of a debate. I am not sure whether that is good or bad, but I have tried to be generous.

Mr. Mitchell: The Minister should go for the record. I wish to follow up the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) about compensation. My hon. Friend referred to decommissioning, but why will there be no compensation if, in future, the number of days at sea is limited as a result of Government policy? If farmland is set aside, the farmer receives compensation. If the time during which a fisherman can go to sea, and therefore the time during which he is able to produce is limited, why should he not receive compensation in the same way? The crew is paid on a share-fishing basis, so they need the revenue. The whole economics of a fisherman's enterprise are affected by such a limitation, but the Minister says that the intention is to reduce his catches because that time limitation is a conservation measure.

Why is the fisherman not compensated in the same way as the farmer? I do not see any provision for that in the Bill, although there is a provision to allocate £4 million to administer the scheme, which is only half the £8 million that the Government will contribute to the decommissioning scheme. The administration is fairly expensive, but there is no provision for compensation to fishermen.

Mr. Curry: First, let me correct the hon. Gentleman's second point. It is one of the great canards that the Government will contribute only £8 million to the scheme. Let me make it absolutely clear. Because of the way in which the Fontainebleau mechanism works, at least £20 million of British taxpayers' money will go to the £25 million scheme. The French scheme received £3 million of French taxpayers' money. Our scheme will be bigger and better than that operated in France because we shall allocate £20 million to it. I wish to put that on the record because it is frequently said that that is not the case. I can supply the hon. Gentleman with all the algebra to prove that that is so.

On compensation, it is not our intention that a fisherman should fall short of his legitimate quota because of the restrictions. We want to stop the discard and to control fish mortality. If it came to the point where it appeared that the quota could not be fulfilled, we would obviously wish to discuss with Brussels the possibility of relaxing the quota to enable it to be fulfilled. Tackling the problem of fish mortality is at the heart of the Bill.

I have been on my feet for a long time, so I should press on and cover the elements of the Bill which deal with scrutiny and the mid-term review. We operate within the framework of Community legislation, so I shall consider the main issues covered by that.

The Community is currently in the process of the mid-term review of the common agricultural policy. A copy of the Commission report forming the basis for the review is before the House. Subject to the European Court of Justice confirming the view of its Advocate General, we expect relative stability, which guarantees our fishermen a fixed share of fishing opportunities, to be maintained. We also expect the restrictions on access in the 0 to 12-mile zones and in the Shetland box, which are specifically subject to review, to be confirmed for the next 10 years. It seems likely, therefore, that no major changes of principle or to the framwork of the CFP will be made.

We are working for improvements in its implementation. Effort controls, such as we are introducing in the United Kingdom and which I have described earlier, will be an important element. We expect to see better enforcement and I have discussed enforcement with my French and Irish colleagues. It will be a theme of our presidency to try to ensure that we have better and more uniform enforcement, and further conservation measures will be introduced to reduce discards. Later this year, the

Commission will, we expect, make proposals for specific new legislation on this and other topics. Those proposals will be subject to scrutiny by the House in the usual way.

The measures are designed to preserve stocks for British fishermen. They are designed to recognise the importance of fisheries in the United Kingdom for national needs. We shall have to meet our targets—as other countries will have to meet theirs—and we want to have policies in place to meet to them in a way that best guarantees the future of our fishing communities and the jobs which depend upon them.

Fishing is not an industry that one should condemn to long-term decline. We are committed to taking those necessarily tough decisions which will give it a secure base for reconstruction and modernisation. However, it all begins with conservation. No fish equals no future. Without the natural resource, there is nothing—but with a properly managed resource there is a future that is as individualistic and challenging as that of any trade in the world. It is our duty and intention to safeguard that future. The Bill is part of that endeavour and I commend it to the House.

5.36 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): There is no doubt that everyone in the House accepts the need for sensible and effective conservation measures to deal with the problems that our fisheries have faced for some years. The tragedy of the Bill is that it does not cover adequately the problem of conservation: in fact, it should be entitled the sea fish crisis management Bill. That is the Government's approach to a problem that is largely of their own making.

I find it incredible that the Minister talks of a market approach when he refers to a policy that will dictate the number of days that an individual fisherman can spend at sea. It is just like telling a large supermarket that it can open on two days a week only as part of a management policy. The Bill approaches the problem of overcapacity in our fleet not from the point of view of the market, but from a bureaucratic and strict management viewpoint.

The Bill fails to deal with overcapacity. The real problem with our fishing fleet is that there are too many boats chasing too few fish. We have discussed that for many years and hon. Members from both sides have recognised that problem and consistently argued for a sensible decommissioning scheme as the basis for dealing with it. After many years of debate, the Government have finally introduced a decommissioning scheme. What a scheme it is. It is a minnow, a real tiddler of a scheme when compared with the size of the problem. Only £25 million will be provided, and on the figures that I have seen, the capacity of the fleet will be reduced not by 5 per cent.—not a great amount itself—but by about 3 per cent. With such a small amount being provided, the sums available to individual fishermen may be so small that the scheme will have a low take-up and it will fail to attract those people who need reasonable compensation for them to leave the industry. In many cases, they were encouraged to invest in that industry by enlarging their vessels or building new vessels. They now find that they are being restricted in terms of the number of days fishing needed to be viable.

The Bill imposes tie-up conditions on our fleet, while fishermen in other member states, which have used proper decommissioning schemes, will be free to fish when our fishermen are discriminated against. That is neither fair nor reasonable. Although I have listened carefully to the Minister, the fact remains that many other member states have reached their targets through other methods, which means that they do not have to suffer the restrictions to be imposed on our fishing fleets.

The Bill threatens the financial viability of some of our most energetic and efficient fleets and contains no choices. Under decommissioning schemes, people can choose whether to opt in or opt out. This measure will apply to every fisherman, whether he wants to put in a great deal of time or invest large sums in his boats.

There is no guarantee that the Bill is a genuine conservation measure. It may restrict fishermen to remaining in port at certain times of the year, but they might put even more effort into fishing on the days when they can fish, for example, by increasing their crews on those days.

The Bill also has safety implications. We have debated in the past the problem of fishermen being held up in port because of engine breakdowns through no fault of their own. They may run out of days allocated for fishing and may therefore be tempted to go to sea in unsuitable weather to keep up their track records. Those issues must be considered carefully.

Mr. Curry: May I make it clear to the hon. Gentleman, first, that we shall apply the measure flexibly. In the event of bad weather or similar circumstances, as with the eight-day tie-up and the 135-day tie-up, we shall not penalise fishermen. Secondly, I assure the hon. Gentleman that in the event of extraordinarily bad weather over a sustained period so that a fisherman cannot fish during his full allocation of days at sea, that amount will not be deducted from his following year's allocation.

Mr. Morley: I am grateful for that categorical assurance, which will be well received by those concerned.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): Does my hon. Friend share my doubts about the Minister's commitment? For example, the two 10-m boats at Redcar have to push off from the beach because we have no harbour pier. Is the Minister really saying that, in the event of bad weather at Redcar, he will give my two fishermen that assurance? Will the Department be that flexible?

Mr. Morley: That assurance has been given and is now on the official record. My hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) is a doughty fighter for her fishing constituents—*[Interruption.]* Two are as important as any other number. She will ensure that that point is brought to their attention, and I am sure that other hon. Members from fishing ports will take note of the Minister's assurance.

The administration of the scheme is incredibly bureaucratic and its implementation will involve much extra expenditure. The Bill entails an extra expenditure of £4·4 million. I presume that that is for extra staffing, inspectors and administration. I wonder whether that sum could be better used by adding it to the 30 per cent. contribution that the Government must make to find a meaningful decommissioning scheme.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will the hon. Gentleman kindly press the Minister about how localised a storm must be? It seems that there will be total chaos.

Mr. Morley: For those who fish for a living, long periods of bad weather mean that they cannot get out to sea to pursue their legitimate activity. For them, the matter is fairly straightforward. We are aware of the problems that can be caused by bad weather, which is experienced by all fishermen from time to time. But there can be prolonged periods of bad weather. I am glad that the Minister has recognised that there can be such exceptionally bad circumstances and that he has assured us that fishermen will not be penalised because of them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) spoke about financial assistance. When we debate the fishing industry and the agricultural sector, it is always the agricultural sector that receives financial support. The answer to over-capacity within the common agricultural policy is set-aside and support payments for farmers. The solution for over-capacity in the fishing industry is compulsory tie-up with no compensation whatever, but only restrictions on fishermen's rights to work. The Secretary of State returned from Brussels with an agreement on the CAP, which he hailed as a great success and which has involved much extra taxpayers' money. If the Minister considers it a great success to negotiate extra contributions from taxpayers for agricultural support, why cannot we have a similar success for the fishing industry? It would not involve an excessive amount of taxpayers' money but would ensure a stable and sustainable fishing industry.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that the difference is that the set-aside system helps farmers and leaves them in a viable position, but the Government's proposals will make many fishing fleets financially non-viable and knock them out of business altogether?

Mr. Morley: Yes, I agree. If one wants to be totally ruthless in dealing with over-capacity, one way is to make those concerned bankrupt. That solution is not being applied to farmers through support payments—I do not argue that it should be—but it is certainly being applied to fishermen as a form of control.

The Bill leaves many technical questions unanswered. In all fairness, the Minister conceded that some difficulties needed to be looked at. I understand that the number of days at sea are based on 1991 levels. But what about those vessels that are currently less than 17 m and have a non-pressure stock licence and no record of the number of days that they have spent at sea? How will the number of days at sea be allocated to them?

The Minister mentioned flagships. There has been a large increase in the number of flagships operating from foreign ports, particularly Dutch beamers, and we all know of the Spanish problem. How can flagships that operate from foreign ports be affected? How can the regulations be enforced when those flagships have a fishing licence, in the same way as boats from Grimsby, Maryport or Tynemouth, while operating from Spain or France? Will the Minister have an inspector in every European port to ensure that they comply with the regulations? How will the rules be applied in those circumstances?

Compulsory tie-up in ports is a desperate solution to a desperate problem. It is an indictment of the Government that, after so many years, they have reached a stage where their only answer to the problem is compulsory tie-up. Their policy is also a form of back-door decommissioning, allied with tradeable days at sea. It risks concentrating the amount of effort in the hands of a few companies. Moreover, further foreign fleets may operate under the British flag and buy up entitlement of days at sea. Those issues need to be considered carefully before we consider the Bill.

The Government cannot bring a Bill before the House in this way and expect our support. As part of the package we want a properly financed and effective decommissioning scheme for a permanent solution, not one with controls on a year-to-year basis. We want boats to be exported properly out of the EC zone. It depresses me that one of the solutions is seen as the scrapping of fishing boats because there is scope for exporting boats released from the fleet through decommissioning as part of an aid programme to developing countries. Not only would that permanently remove those boats from the European fleet, but it could become part of a meaningful and constructive aid package.

A proper package of conservation measures is needed, and we have supported some of the Minister's proposals —indeed, we have argued for them for a long time. We believe that there should be full consultation with the fishermen's organisations, so that we obtain their support, understanding and backing. We have long argued for an end to industrial fishing. The position is now so critical that our fishermen are being forced to tie up their boats in port compulsorily, and there is no longer a role for industrial fishing.

We must reinforce the concept of relative stability, particularly during the mid-term review of the common fisheries policy, and I welcome the Minister's comments on that. We must ensure that the preferential access to the 12-mile zone continues. I welcome the Minister's comments on that.

We must recognise the regional needs of fisheries around the coast. It is about time that we had a comprehensive coastal zone policy to meet the needs of our commercial fisheries when faced with competition and other coastal developments.

There must be proper enforcement procedures and we must ensure that other member states meet our standards. The Minister mentioned other countries. There are other, more constructive ways of reducing effort than making boats tie up in port. Has the Minister considered arguing in the European Community for fishermen who use large mesh to receive a special payment? That would reduce the catch of those fishermen, who would then receive compensation. In turn, that would result in larger fish being caught and there would be no discards. Fish stocks would slowly recover while the policy was implemented. The scheme would be costly, but if we can direct millions and millions of pounds towards the agricultural sector for agricultural restructuring, why cannot we afford modest payments for our fishing fleets around the coasts to ensure sustainable fisheries for the communities who rely on them? I have not heard the Minister advance that argument.

There is an argument for opposing the Bill outright, rather than amending it or pussyfooting around. In its present form, the Bill is unacceptable. Its proposals do not go far enough to deal with the fishing industry's problems. As the Minister rightly said, the fishing industry has been consulted on a series of measures and changes, some of which need careful consideration. The proposals include tradeability in terms of the days-at-sea limitations and

producer organisations. However, the deadline for consultation is not until 12 June, so the industry is still in a consultation period. But we are being asked, on 8 June, to pass a Bill that will give the Minister—no matter what he says—an open cheque to impose conditions on the fishing industry before the end of the consultation period. That is absolutely incredible—there should be more consideration of fishermen's views.

Ultimately, difficult and unpopular decisions about conservation may have to be made. The Minister acknowledged that fishermen have put forward proposals for a series of effective conservation measures, including square mesh, one-net rules, variations on by-catch, shellfish licensing and bans on twin and triple-rig prawn trawls. They deserve recognition for their proposals and should be given a guarantee that there will be full consultation until the deadline. We should not rush through the Bill before consultation is complete.

Mr. Curry: That is the most bogus of all the hon. Gentleman's remarks. The Bill is an enabling Bill to confer the relevant powers. I should have thought that the House would be pleased that the Government attach such a high priority to fisheries that they have brought forward this measure as one of the first of the new Session. It does not cut across the details of implementation. We have made it absolutely clear that the link between decommissioning, effort control and all the other measures is not negotiatable. We have made it equally clear that the details of how we apply that policy are open to the fullest discussion, which remains our position.

Mr. Morley: I cannot accept that argument. The Bill gives the Minister enormous powers of intervention. While we may agree with some aspects of the Bill, such as increased fines for fishermen who break the regulations, if, as the Minister said, there are to be links between decommissioning and effort control, it is all the more reason to have meaningful discussions with the fishermen about how to apply the policy. There is no excuse for presenting a Bill with such powers before the completion of the consultation period. I have drawn to the Minister's attention the fact that the Bill contains major problems which have yet to be resolved. Time should have been spent resolving those problems before the Bill was brought to the House.

The Bill is not part of a proper, rational or effective conservation scheme, but a panic measure. It is an insult to the industry and the House. It is essential for the Government to withdraw the Bill and to bring forward a measure containing the elements of which we have spoken to ensure a stable, sustainable industry in a form that will command all-party support. The Bill fails to do that. It is ill-thought-out and draconian, and the industry has not been given time to respond. Fishermen have not been properly consulted to ensure that the measure is effective, and works well for the good of the industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before I call other hon. Members, I advise the House that, although Madam Speaker did not impose a 10-minute limit on speeches, I hope that hon. Members will show a degree of self discipline so that as many speakers as possible may be called.

5.57 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): No one in the House has greater admiration for my hon. Friend the Minister of State than I have. I served with him in the European Parliament and believe that he is a good fisheries Minister and a good friend of the fishing industry. My view is backed by the actions that he has taken in the interests of fishermen, not just in my constituency, but throughout the country. However, I have the greatest reservations about the Bill and cannot support it in the Lobby tonight. There are many reasons for that, some of which have been rehearsed by the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley). The Bill's defects have also been highlighted in the barrage of interventions to which my hon. Friend the Minister was subjected during his speech.

The measure will result in an administrative nightmare. I cannot see how, even with an increase of 60 man years, such a system can be enforced and policed around the coasts. There is no chance of implementing this measure in respect of the wretched boats that are on our register but are Spanish or Dutch-controlled, or flag-of-convenience vessels of other countries. There is no way in which they will be subjected to a days-at-sea limitation. For that reason alone, I believe that there is ground for not supporting the Bill.

It goes further than that, however. My hon. Friend the Minister made a point of saying that the Bill was merely an enabling measure. I was glad when the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) pounced on him; if he had not done so, I would have. Under cross-examination, my hon. Friend admitted that he, or his successors—he, of course, is a reasonable man, but his successors may be less reasonable—could impose any restriction that he or they pleased on days at sea without the matter returning to the House. I cannot agree with such a proposal: it is wrong and unrealistic. Moreover, action is to be taken unilaterally. Our fishermen will be subject to restrictions, whereas fishermen in most European countries probably will not.

It is not good enough for my hon. Friend the Minister to say, as he did earlier, that the aim is to protect our own interests and our own fish stocks. It is true that, in some areas and some species, we have the overwhelming bulk of the quotas, but I am told that, in area 7—the south-west of England—our quotas amount to just 10 per cent. of total allowable catches. I believe that fishermen from other countries will continue to fish while our boats are tied up, and politically that is not on: there will be uproar among our fishermen if it happens. I would not mind so much if this were a European measure, imposed in uniform terms and enforced across the Community. I do not believe, however, that it is right to impose such a measure when other fishermen are not subject to the same restrictions.

I was pleased to hear my hon. Friend's assurance that he would implement the measure flexibly, taking account of all the difficulties encountered by fishermen; but, with respect, I do not feel that he is in a position to give such a pledge. As my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) pointed out, bad weather can be very localised. For example, there is a world of difference between the weather on the north coast of Cornwall and the weather on the south coast. I do not believe that it is beyond the wit of my hon. Friend, and his administrators in the Ministry, to take account of such factors in implementing the restrictions.

[Mr. David Harris]

Many hon. Members will remember the difficulties that we all encountered when milk quotas were introduced—particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks). Those quotas were fixed according to a baseline. Farmer after farmer came to tell us, "That baseline caused me particular disadvantage, because of such-and-such a set of circumstances." If we fix the 1991 baseline in this enabling legislation and the measures that flow from it, exactly the same will happen: fisherman after fisherman will come to us and say, "During 1991 my boat had to be laid up, and I could not go to sea for such-and-such a reason."

I was reassured to learn that an appeal system would be introduced, but I fear that that will add enormously to the administrative difficulties. I wonder whether my hon. Friend has considered what he is embarking on.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is it not an extraordinary move to establish an appeal system that has no statutory basis? No such system is included in the Bill.

Mr. Harris: That may be true, but I have great respect for my hon. Friend, and I am sure that he will set up such a system; indeed, he has given the House a pledge to that effect. I am merely saying that I expect the hearing and handling of such appeals to present enormous difficulties. After all, there will be a good many of them.

We all realise that conservation measures must be painful. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend in that regard, and I do not entirely accept the view of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations—from which we have all received representations—that the legislation will sound the death knell of our fishing fleet. I do believe, however, that it will cause difficulties for many fishermen—certain types of fisherman. We should also remember that some of the fishermen on whom my hon. Friend intends to impose restrictions—I am not quite sure how, but they may be imposed on a geographical basis and involve a large number of boats—will probably not be fishing against quota in respect of some species. I wonder about the logic of that.

What really frightened me, however, was my hon. Friend's statement that the powers in the Bill would enable him—or, rather, his successors; he said that he would not use them—to extend the restrictions to all types of fishing boat, however small. Is that really sensible? Is it defensible? Is my hon. Friend really saying that small boats operating from coves such as Penberth, in my constituency, should be affected? The sea is practically flat there, and any little swell means that the fishermen cannot put to sea. Are they to face even the possibility of restrictions when they have to pick their fishing days with such care? It simply is not on. I beg my hon. Friend to reconsider.

I accept that measures must be introduced and that, if they are to work, they must be painful. I also believe, however, especially in the present climate of distrust and difficulty among our fishermen, that such measures must be seen to be as fair as possible. There must be equity between different types of fisherman, and, especially, between our fishermen and those of other countries.

I do not believe that the industry will wear this, and I think that it is right not to wear it. The Bill is already anathema to our fishermen, and—as I said earlier—it will not receive my support.

6.7 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes: (Aberdeen, North): I believe that all of us, except hon. Members who are new to debates such as this, are experiencing a sense of déjà vu. Here we are again, trying to marry conservation issues with stability in the fishing industry. I have sad news for new Members: in 12 months' time, we shall be back again, examining the whole package and trying to find out where we are. Yet all of us want stability.

New Members will note another recurring theme. The processing side of the industry will constantly say that its needs are never considered. I appreciate that view; all too often in our debates, the really important people neglected turn out to be the consumers—and the consumers can secure a decent deal for a wholesome and healthy food only if there are fish to be caught. It is a circular argument.

I make no apology for saying that we can never solve the problems, however we view them, unless we can bring about stability on the catching side. That is the side on which I wish to concentrate. On 2 June, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland—the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro)—sent me a letter which was probably sent to every Scottish Member. The letter was intended to be helpful; it set out the various aspects of Government policy, and the various other issues pertaining to the industry allied to the Bill. I am sorry to have to say to the Minister that the last two sentences of the letter show breathtaking complacency. He said:

> "These measures will give the United Kingdom the most comprehensive fisheries conservation and management policy in the European Community. They are based on the central recognition that conservation, capacity and effort controls have to be dealt with as complementary measures."

No one would quarrel with the last sentence but, as is so often the case, alas, the rhetoric does not match up to the reality of the proposals.

The Government resisted, week in and week out in the House during the last Parliament, calls for a decent decommissioning scheme. Finally, in the pre-election scramble for votes the Government decided that they had better do something, so they brought forward proposals for discussion.

Mr. Salmond: Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the letter is that included among those who in the past had called for an adequately-funded decommissioning scheme was the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro).

Mr. Hughes: I do not cast that in the Minister's face. Any Back Bencher who has become a Minister must have said something in the past which is then thrown in his face. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) should not therefore be too hard on the Minister. Nevertheless, it is a good debating point, just like the Minister's final defence of acting unilaterally by invoking the well-liked principle of subsidiarity when it came to the European Commission.

Mr. Beith: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to intervene?

Mr. Hughes: I am anxious not to give way too much, bearing in mind the strictures of the Chair about taking too long, since there is no 10-minute rule. This will be the last intervention that I shall allow.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman ought to recognise that what the Minister was saying about subsidiarity was that we reserve the right to punish ourselves when nobody else is punishing themselves.

Mr. Hughes: I had better not be tempted to discuss self-flagellation, otherwise we shall all be confused.

We all agree that the industry's problems have got to be solved on a comprehensive basis, but—and it is a very big "but"—the trouble is that each constituent part of the package has to be viable and effective in its own right. It is a very old story: that the strength of the chain depends upon the strength of its weakest link. If all the links do not carry the same strength, the chain falls apart.

The Government's decommissioning proposals are inadequate in two respects. By almost common agreement the decommissioning scheme is insufficient in its scope and does not seriously address the reduction in fishing effort. The Government's scheme still fails totally to take any account of the fishermen whose jobs will disappear as a result of the decommissioning of fishing vessels. It is obvious—I do not know why we have to keep on driving the point home—that if a vessel can no longer fish the crew can no longer go to sea. They no longer have a vocation and they no longer have a livelihood. It remains essential, therefore, in my view, that compensation, either directly from the Government or through the European social fund—it makes no difference where the money comes from—should be made available to the fishermen. We shall continue to press that point upon Ministers for as long as it takes.

If we look just at the Government's proposals without regard to other matters, the decommissioning scheme will not work. The Government concede implicitly that the scheme will not work by itself. Therefore, they have brought into play another part of the package, which is that the fish producer organisations should be provided with the power to buy up the fishing track records of those who wish to leave the industry. That sounds all right, but it is clear that vessel owners will have to choose either to decommission their vessels under the decommissioning scheme or to sell their track record. They cannot do both. The trouble is that selling the track records does not bring about a reduction in fishing effort. It certainly brings about a reduction in the number of boats, but that is not the same thing. The bought-in capacity would be reallocated again—presumably sold—to the vessels that want to continue to fish.

What effect would that have on the skippers and crews that want to continue to fish? Would it lead to increased financial pressures on skippers, especially since the Bill is intended to reduce the number of days during which vessels can go to sea? How would that be determined? In my naivety—I apologise for not having understood previous briefings—I had understood that this would be applied sector by sector. It never occurred to me for one moment that fishing effort at sea would be determined boat by boat.

When I had to stand at the Dispatch Box I had a recurrent nightmare of trying to make some sense of the milk quota scheme. I said at that time that if a Labour Government had introduced the kind of bureaucratic nonsense to which the milk quota scheme led, Conservative Members would have been baying for the blood of Labour Ministers. I suspect that if positions had been reversed and the Labour party had been in government and had introduced this Bill, the Conservatives would have roared their heads off about creeping socialism and bureaucratic red tape and would have said how impossible it was to introduce such a scheme boat by boat. It just cannot be done.

The hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) referred to the bad weather that can be encountered in north and south Cornwall. I have no doubt that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) will say that fishermen will argue, "The weather may be uniformly bad between the ports of Macduff, Banff, Portsoy, Whitehills and Buckie, but the harbours are different and it's safer to sail from one port in the same weather or to come back to that port in the same weather than to do so at the port next door." How is anyone going to monitor the scheme boat by boat? That is utter nonsense. The Minister will have to think this out clearly. I suspect that what lies behind all this is that the Government have always believed in decommissioning and in the reduction of fishing effort by bankruptcy.

As for the purchase of track records by the fish producer organisations, can the Minister tell us whether there will be any guidelines on the criteria for purchase? The Minister said that there would be no question of, for example, Humberside buying up Scottish quotas, or vice versa, and that it would be a mistake to think that that will happen. However, the Minister said that track records would be brought within the FPOs. That does not resolve the central problem that concerns fishermen—that wealthy sectors of the industry would be able to buy out the poorer sectors where fishing is part of real community life. Unless we are careful, the rich sectors will buy out the poor ones and communities will be destroyed.

The package is full of imponderables. I was grateful to the Minister for giving way so often during his speech until I realised what might have been his intention. Perhaps I am ascribing too Machiavellian an approach to him, but he may have thought that if he gave way often enough we should all be so confused that we would go away not having understood the Bill and other measures and given him an easy time, whereas in fact he is getting a fairly rough ride. The industry is obviously unhappy. The Minister will say that it always has been and that it always will find fault. That is true. The industry will always find something wrong with whatever is offered, but careful consideration shows that, more often than not, it has been right, and that must be taken into account.

The Scottish Fishermen's Federation met today, I understand, to try to arrive at a cohesive and consensual response. It is unhappy about the one-net rule. The rule's advantage is that it avoids cheating, but a blanket approach can have deleterious effects. The Minister knows only too well of the prawn fleet's legitimate concerns.

Whatever the final basket of measures proposed, the Government will find that it will work only if it has the co-operation and assent of the industry. Ministers have frequently said, and they said so today, how much they value consultation with the industry. Why, therefore, are they introducing the Bill when the consultation process has not been completed?

I was surprised that the Minister did not have a ready answer to that. The ready answer that he could have offered is that this is a Second Reading and that in Committee there will be plenty of time to amend the Bill in the light of recommendations. The fact that he did not use that argument suggests that his mind is made up, that

[Mr. Hughes]

the consultation process is not worth the paper that it is written on and that by taking these enabling powers—this blank cheque—the House will be cut out of consultation. I do not object to the Minister consulting the industry, but he must also consult hon. Members and the people who represent fishermen.

I want to ask two questions that have not been asked thus far. First, what is happening about the extraordinary case that occurred in Stornoway in the past couple of weeks? It appears that if a foreign vessel comes in United Kingdom waters with the intention of fishing it is not breaching the law. That is curious. I am sure that the Minister will answer that point when replying to the debate.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): I should like to clear that up now. The hon. Member, who is experienced in fishing matters, will remember the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1967. The procurator fiscal charged a boat for particular reasons. We are not appealing against the decision on that charge. We feel that other aspects of the Act can cover anything that is likely to happen again, and if foreign boats enter British waters we shall deal with them.

Mr. Hughes: That point will have to be considered in Committee, and I hope that we shall be able to table an amendment to probe it. The Minister cannot rest on what he appears to be saying—that the procurator fiscal brought the wrong charge. We need a firmer basis of law than that.

Secondly, what about fisheries protection? We hear a marvellous story in the press—I do not always believe what I read in the press—that MAFF will privatise its fishery protection service, which I believe it purchased from the Navy. What is meant by that, and will the Minister assure us that the protection of Scottish fisheries will not be privatised? It seems crazy to spoil the ship for a hap'orth of tar by privatising the industry when a Government-sponsored fishery protection fleet already exists.

I hope that I will not have to make a final plea again, but I fear that I will have to do so: may we, for goodness sake, achieve a system that provides stability so that the industry can plan and so that processors can have an adequate supply? Above all, unless we deal with this properly a wholesome healthy food will disappear from the housewife's budget. If that happens, we can forget about conservation because no one will buy fish and there will be no point in fishermen going to sea.

6.24 pm

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to make my first speech in the House. It gives me particular pleasure that you are in the Chair. I should like to record the number of my constituents who have said, "It is wonderful to see our Janet in the Chair."

It is a nice convention of the House that I pay tribute to my predecessor, Ken Warren. Hon. Members who spent time with him on the Select Committee on Trade and Industry were never bored. Those who were kind enough or lucky enough to benefit from his many years as the hon. Member for Hastings, and latterly for Hastings and Rye, will be aware of his tremendous record in serving his constituents and how much they respected and admired him for it.

I should like to take this opportunity briefly to mention Ken Warren's predecessor in Rye—it was only after the boundary changes that he became the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye—Sir Bryant Godman Irvine, who recently died. It was with great sadness that I learned that news, but it was of great pleasure that he offered to help me in the election campaign.

Hastings and Rye is an historic constituency. My job was once done by six Members of Parliament, because at one time Rye, Winchelsea and Hastings had two Members of Parliament each. I am sure that they did not receive the amount of post that I receive every morning.

The Cinque Ports Confederation was set up because of our direct link with the fishing industry; Hastings, Winchelsea and Rye were members from an early age. My constituency is littered with remnants of defence mechanisms against hordes from across the water. Camber castle was set up by Henry VIII to repel the French. The Royal Military canal and the Martello towers were built to repel the French and pill boxes were built to repel the Germans. I hope that we shall never have to build such defences again.

However, because of those defences we have a marvellous tourist industry. It is ironic that the battle of Hastings is known throughout the world. The landing took place at Pevensey and the battle took place at Battle, not at Hastings. People come to see our Norman castle and all the other associated facets.

We therefore have a thriving industry of language schools, and I am glad to say that about 25 per cent. of our tourists come to language schools. It is nice to think that we are contributing to exporting the English language not only to west Europeans but to an increasing number of east Europeans, who recognise the need for fluent English.

My constituency is not only a tourist constituency. On Friday, I had the delightful opportunity of visiting one of the few hand-made brick factories in the country. It introduced me to the smile on the face of the hand-made brick. It produces bricks for the National Trust and makes the mathematical tile. For hon. Members who are not architects, the mathematical tile is used in building in Rye and Lewes.

At the other end of the industrial spectrum, we have a company called Computing Devices. In the Gulf war, its reconnaissance system was used on the Tornado aircraft and it is arguable that the war would not have proceeded as it did if it had not been for the company. However, that company is adjusting to other problems and it is ironic that one of its biggest contracts is for the European fighter aircraft. It is also chasing a contract for the Jubilee line, so the computing industry is living dangerously.

Although the constituency is successful, it suffers from poverty. We have a very high level of unemployment and our average pay is not only less than the national average wage but less than the south-east wage. We also have the problems associated with that—high levels of single-parent families, of homelessness and drug abuse. It may seem strange to say that many of those problems could be solved if the Government were to invest in the A21 and the A259. In his maiden speech about 20 years ago, my predecessor made the same point. I hope that it will not be

another 20 years before I can stop talking about the A21 and the A259, but I promise to bore the House as long as necessary.

One of the constituency's significant industries is the fishing industry. As I said, the Cinque Ports Confederation came about because of the industry, and that has not changed. It was interesting that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) said that, in a year's time, new hon. Members would be suffering from déjà vu. When my godmother, the redoubtable Hon. Pat Hornsby-Smith, introduced me to the Chamber for the first time, I witnessed a debate on the then White Fish Authority, so I am already suffering from déjà vu.

Unlike some hon. Members, I shall support the Bill, although the two fishing fleets in Hastings and Rye have significant worries. They are inshore fishing fleets, and the Hastings fleet consists entirely of boats of less than 10 m. It welcomes the extension of the licence, but, like every other fishing fleet, it is worried about the potential extension of the licence to cover days at sea. I am grateful to the Minister for saying that there will be flexibility in how days at sea are recorded and, as the fleet of under-10 m boats have no days logged, it will know from now on how closely it must log its days at sea to get the best possible deal should there ever be an extension to under-10 m boats.

Another worry is decommissioning which, under the present system, does not apply to the fleet, but should it ever do so it may face the difficulty of reducing its size. The fleet says that if its size is reduced too often, it will have to put to sea in coracles, which is not what any of us would wish. Rye has a 10-to-17-m fishing fleet, which is specially caught by the days-at-sea extension. It is keen to ensure that we cover the issue of flexibility—and I agree with every point made about weather and conditions in 1991—but, as I understand it, the fleet does not have to log its catch if it has not caught precious stocks. Therefore, there will be an automatic under-logging of its days at sea, and I should be grateful for an assurance that that will be taken into account.

It is interesting that Rye Harbour is the only harbour owned by the National Rivers Authority. The NRA is trying to move our historic fishing fleet from one part of the harbour to another which is, of course, causing the fishermen enormous problems. I hope that the fact that the NRA owns one harbour may change very soon so that it is no longer involved in a business in which it should not have been involved in the first place.

Finally, may I mention the problem of a boat-builder in my constituency who was caught when the first decommissioning system was introduced and he had two 30-m boats on his stocks. He had orders for four 10-m boats, all of which have been cancelled. The bank has withdrawn financing and that withdrawal has not only made it impossible for him to carry on boat-building but has made it exceedingly difficult for him to get financing for any other business. Therefore, he was caught, to use an election phrase, in a double whammy.

It would be nice to have an assurance from the Minister that that case will be considered seriously so that the boat-builder involved can continue in business as, historically, the fishing fleet, the fishermen and everyone involved in the industry in Hastings and Rye have been entrepreneurial and self-sufficient. I should hate to think of that tradition coming to an end.

6.35 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): May I be the first to congratulate the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) on her eloquent maiden speech. She paid tribute to her predecessor who was Chairman of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, and it was recognised by hon. Members of all parties that neither he nor his Committee shirked tackling controversial issues. The House owes him a great debt for the way in which he dealt with issues such as the Iraqi super-gun and, from a Scottish perspective, the future of the steel industry in Scotland.

The hon. Lady gave us an insight into the issues with which she has to grapple in her constituency. As fisheries spokesman for my party, I went to Hastings about 15 months ago and met representatives of the industry there. I know that she will be very well briefed on fishing issues as the industry there is well able to articulate its case, and I look forward to hearing contributions from the hon. Lady in future fishing debates and, indeed, in other debates.

The Bill is short but, nevertheless, important for the industry. I think that it is common ground among hon. Members that conservation is acknowledged to be of supreme importance if the industry is to have a future. The Minister rightly acknowledges that many of the organisations that represent the fishing industry have in recent years acted constructively by suggesting specific measures and, above all, by arguing for a decommissioning scheme which at long last, in the immediate run-up to an election, the Government were prepared to allow but only—as I shall show later—in a very limited way.

We believe that the amount of money put on the table for decommissioning is insufficient and the fact that it has strings attached—as the Bill shows—is unsatisfactory. The Minister took the opportunity to claim that, far from there being only £7·5 million put into decommissioning from United Kingdom resources, the figure was nearer £20 million because of the Fontainebleau agreement. Although it has been raised on many occasions when decommissioning has been debated, one question has never been answered: how much will the Inland Revenue receive from fishermen who opt for decommissioning? We need that information if we are to make a proper analysis of how much it will cost the Government.

Even allowing for the Minister's qualification, there is a perception in the industry that the measure is far too small to have a worthwhile effect on reducing the capacity of the fleet to bring it more into line with the fishing opportunities. The fact that there is a need for the Bill to enable the Government to take powers to restrict days at sea is an admission that what they are doing in decommissioning is insufficient to meet the multi-annual guidance programme targets, which is why they are having to link decommissioning to the restriction of days at sea.

An important point which has already been mentioned and which is also covered in the reasoned amendment to be moved in due course by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), if he catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that there has been inadequate consultation on the Bill and the measures announced by the Government on 27 February. As the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) said, the responses to the consultation period are due in on 13 June and here we are debating the Second Reading on 8 June.

[Mr. James Wallace]

The Minister sought to give an answer similar to that given by the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, in a letter on 2 June to Scottish Members, which has already been referred to by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes). He says in the letter:

"The industry is being consulted on the detailed application of these policies. The Fisheries Bill is an enabling measure which would give Ministers powers to restrict the number of days fishermen may spend at sea."

Not only the Opposition but Conservative Members, as the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) acknowledged, should be concerned about giving Ministers enabling powers. It is not a light matter. One of our functions as parliamentarians, whether on fisheries matters or on any other subject, is continually to hold the Executive to account. That means being very careful before we, as the House of Commons, give them powers that they can then operate in a way for which, as the Minister suggested, they will not have to answer to the House. The Minister will not have to answer to the House before he makes detailed conditions attaching to any licence about days at sea.

When the Minister said that there were more than 3,400 individual licences, I had the impression that we were talking about the potential for different conditions to attach to each licence as opposed to there being conditions that would attach to certain classes or to certain areas. That opens up the prospect of an appalling bureaucratic and administrative nightmare. It is estimated in the Bill that an additional £4·4 million will be spent on enforcement. I do not believe that that is the end of it because the Bill does not refer to the appeals mechanism which the Minister announced. I am not sure whether an appeals mechanism requires statute; we may be able to probe that matter in Committee.

The hon. Member for St. Ives pointed out that, when milk quotas were introduced, almost everyone had individual circumstances which made them different. I am sure that the question will also arise with fishermen. Some hon. Members have mentioned the weather and there will no doubt be fishermen somewhere who had to tie up for three or four extra days in 1991 because they had to return to port to attend a funeral or for some other reason.

Mr. Salmond: The compulsory tie-up.

Mr. Wallace: Indeed; the compulsory tie-up is another reason.

All hon. Members who have constituencies involving the fishing industry must have discovered that it is already almost a nightmare for anyone to work out exactly what the various conditions are. They depend on what percentage catches fishermen had in 1990 if they come into certain categories. There have been certain derogations according to gear options. The conditions differ according to species.

When the milk quota regulations were introduced, I recall saying to my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) that our late hon. Friend, David Penhaligon, said that a farmer probably needed a Queen's counsel before he went out to milk the cows. I suspect that fishermen will be in dire need of having in-house or on—board legal advice before they put to sea. We are creating a bureaucratic nightmare in the Bill which could be avoided if the Government were prepared to grasp the nettle and to put adequate resources into a decommissioning scheme.

The Minister said that the Government would consult and that those consultations would be taken into account in the detail. One assumes that the Bill will go into Committee next Tuesday. Perhaps the Minister will inform the House later if the Government have any other thoughts. Next Tuesday is not long after this Friday, and there will not be much time to give proper consideration to any detailed submissions.

Even though the Government, with good intent, have said that they are prepared to consult, there is a problem. An illustration of this is the implementation of the one-net rule, which has especially been mentioned by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). The one-net rule has been mentioned in many of the industry's submissions on conservation measures, and there will always be many important qualifications attached to it.

The qualifications relate especially to the by-catch arrangements which go with the use of a 70 mm net for the nephrops fisheries. The industry has said that there must be changes in the by-catch arrangements before the one-net rule is acceptable. Instead of that, the Government have gone ahead unilaterally and have introduced the one-net rule. They have not taken sufficient account of the qualifications that the industry always said should go along with the one-net rule. I know that the reason given is that the United Kingdom Government cannot change the by-catch rules on their own and that such a change requires Community endorsement.

I hope that the Minister will state clearly that the Government intend to press for such changes in the European forum, not least when they have the opportunity to do so during Britain's presidency in the next six months. To hear that the Government intend to press for such changes would be of considerable benefit and reassurance to the industry, especially to fishermen who would be caught by the one-net rule. They hope that the Government will postpone to 1 January 1993 the introduction of the measure.

I turn now to the issue of days at sea. I have already said that we believe that it is wrong that the issue should be the strings attached to the decommissioning proposal. Hon. Members have also asked whether the European Community will accept such a measure as a means of fulfilling MAGP targets. Have the Government any assurance on that? The hon. Member for St. Ives has made the point strongly that our industry will take it badly if it is subject to increasing tie-ups while industries from other Community countries are free to fish in the same waters without such restrictions.

The point has also been raised about whether any other industry could be expected to accept the sterilisation of its assets without adequte compensation. Contrasts have been made with the position in agriculture, where those who have now been effectively compelled to set aside land have been compensated for doing so. That is a question of surplus capacity in land; here we have a question of surplus catching capacity.

The Minister gave an interesting answer. He sought to make a distinction by saying that there is a quota in the fishing industry and that the fisherman would catch his quota anyway. That raises even more fundamental questions about why we are to have tie-up days at all if the

quotas will be caught anyway. We need a proper explanation of what the Minister meant because there seems to be a denial of economic efficiency. It appears that the Government are adopting the easy option when it would be worth while to try other measures, such as an adequate decommissioning scheme.

Various reasons have been given to explain why the days-at-sea restrictions are not wholly satisfactory. Safety considerations have been aired in a number of debates. I pointed out to the Minister, when he was so willing to take interventions, that proper consideration should be given to a boat that had to steam back to its home port or put into port for repairs.

I take the point made by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North that hon. Members may say things when they are on the Back Benches and then have them cast up when they become Ministers. The hon. Member for Dumfries is now able to do something about the matter. I am not trying to catch him out; I hope that he will now use his good offices. I remind him of what he said on 5 March 1991——

Sir Hector Monro: It was very good stuff.

Mr. Wallace: Indeed, it was very good stuff and I am sure that the Minister will enjoy my repeating it. He said:

"We all know that we cannot amend the instrument; we can only reject or accept it. However, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider the interpretation of the regulations and be flexible. My hon. Friend the Minister should consider the sea time between the port where the fish have been landed and the journey to the home port. A vessel may land fish in Peterhead while its home port may be Lossiemouth or Burghead. The journey back to home port is a dead sea time during which no fishing takes place, but that time must count towards the eight days."—[*Official Report*, 5 March 1991; Vol. 187, c. 241.]

The Minister was spot on. I remember the speech well, and I am sure that, now that he is in a position to encourage such flexibility, we can rely on him to do so.

I think that it is widely accepted that vessels of less than 10 m in length should now come within the licensing regime, although, again, we must remember that we enter dangerous ground if we give the Government open-ended powers. The Minister said that he did not at present intend to extend the days-at-sea restrictions to vessels of less than 10 m in length. The trouble is that a much more unreasonable Minister may follow in the hon. Gentleman's shoes, in which case that assurance would be worthless. That is why it is important that we should be careful about granting Ministers such open-ended powers.

On the question of quota trading, it has been clear that the idea of individual tradeable quotas is something about which many hon. Members have great reservations because of the possibility of their being concentrated in relatively few hands. The Minister sought to reassure us, but we should like to know more about what he has in mind with regard to producer organisations taking in track record. Does he envisage the producer organisations holding on to their share and distributing it annually among their members? Will the share be held within a community for future generations of fishermen? If the idea is to try to maintain fishing activity within a particular community, do the Government have any idea of the way forward for communities such as those in Orkney, in my constituency, where there is no particular producer organisation linked to the community and where vessels belong to a variety of producer organisations?

With regard to the mid-term review, there is widespread agreement on the need for relative stability. Will the Under-Secretary amplify the statement that the Minister made in his opening remarks that provisions regarding the Shetland box would be confirmed? Did he mean that they would be confirmed as they are at present? What is the Government's response to the suggestion, which I support, that the box should be geographically extended and that there should be greater restrictions on the number of vessels that may enter and operate in it than has been the case for the past 10 years?

Finally, may I propose that a suitable and pragmatic way forward would be to refer the Bill to a Special Standing Committee? That would allow the industry and others to make representations and give evidence, which members of the Committee could then consider. Given the sweeping powers available to Ministers under the Bill and the lack of time for adequate consultation, it would be a sign of good will and good faith on the part of the Government—a sign that they mean what they say about taking into account the detailed representations of the industry—if they accepted that suggestion. The Bill would be well suited to the Special Standing Committee procedure, and I hope that, in the spirit of co-operation and of consultation, in the true meaning of the word, that course will commend itself to the Government.

6.52 pm

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): It is a particular pleasure to be the first Conservative Member to speak following the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait). She and I have met before and I have no doubt that she will bring to our deliberations the same wit, good humour and ability that Ken Warren always displayed. It is a particular pleasure to see hers among old and familiar faces here today.

It is less of a pleasure to take part in a debate with the Bill as its subject. My hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) made a powerful speech outlining the concerns that are widely felt about the measure before us. We must, of course, be serious about the need for conservation. Anyone with any sense and with any knowledge of the industry accepts that, but there must be proper management, and I welcome the fact that the Government have produced a package.

I also welcome the fact that we are at last to have a decommissioning scheme. My own view was that such a scheme was inevitable and that it was simply a question of how soon it came into being. There remains the question of its adequacy or otherwise. I had intended to ask the Under-Secretary of State the extent to which he saw that decommissioning scheme leading to a reduction in capacity. In answer to earlier cross-questioning, he gave a figure of only 5 per cent. That seems to me to be a very small reduction, given the figures that are bandied around in connection with the possible extent of overcapacity in the industry. The figures that I have seen range from 12 per cent. through 20 and 30 per cent. to 40 per cent. I should have thought that 40 per cent. was on the high side, but 5 per cent.—if that is, indeed, the reduction that will result from decommissioning—seems very modest, and seems to leave far too much overcapacity to be dealt with by other technical measures.

One of the sad facts about today's debate is that the Bill is regarded as having been introduced with improper

[Mr. Neville Trotter]

haste. I realise that it is an enabling Bill and that it has the whole of its parliamentary proceedings ahead of it. In my view, however, it would have been much more sensible to wait until the consultation period ended on 12 June. There will, of course, be time for views to be taken into account during the Bill's later stages, but in view of the difficulties facing the industry it was perhaps insensitive to introduce the Bill at this point.

I remain uncertain as to the effects that the Bill will have. On the one hand, we hear that it will put a large number of fishermen out of business; on the other, we are told that there will be more intensive effort and therefore no reduction in the total catch. I am therefore somewhat confused about the likely outcome. The Minister said that if the Bill resulted in too intensive an effort he might have to go back to Brussels. I could not quite understand how Brussels entered into the consideration of the Bill. As I understand it, it is a national move not reflected elsewhere in the Community. That point has been strongly made by Members on both sides of the House. It is essential that there should be fair competition between our industry and others in Europe.

That brings me to the question of enforcement and the future of the Royal Navy fishery protection squadron. I understand that in Scotland the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries operates some vessels of its own, proving that it is possible for civilian vessels to fulfil the role. We are all aware that the squadron is held in extremely high regard by the industry and we would certainly not want the standard of enforcement to fall. We need to ensure that those from abroad who compete against our industry do so in accordance with the rules. I hope that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary will refer in his winding-up speech to the suggestion that there is to be a phasing out of the Royal Navy's excellent capability and tell us a little more about the Government's proposals.

I think that the word "draconian" was correctly used to describe the powers which can be taken under the Bill. I do not believe that they will be used in a draconian way, but there is a danger that they could. I seek an assurance that such powers would never be used without a debate in the House, on each occasion on which their exercise is sought. That is a perfectly reasonable request and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will respond to it positively.

This is a Bill of great significance for the industry, which is facing a difficult time, as it has throughout my time in the House. We now have the mid-term review hanging over us, and that is probably the most important issue facing the industry. I believe that the powers under the Bill will be sensibly and fairly applied by the Ministers now responsible, but there is a danger that at some future stage they may not be. We need to know a great deal more about the details of the Government's view of the implementation of the powers that they propose to take.

I am concerned that fishermen will have to give 12 hours notice if they wish to register themselves as being in port. That will mean that they cannot take advantage of the weather in choosing the days on which their vessels will be laid up. I am sure that all of us will want to ensure that there is no compulsion to go to sea in dangerous conditions simply to comply with what is regarded as a negative rule.

I welcome the proposal on decommissioning. All those active in the industry and I have been campaigning for that for a very long time, but we should spare a thought for the crews of the vessels concerned. The owners will obtain compensation, but what about the crews? Those crews might need retraining. To make a local point, we have an excellent training school in North Shields which is not replicated over a great distance north and south. Places like the North Shields training school should be encouraged to expand their traditional training of fishermen to retraining those who may give up their time at sea as a result of the introduction of the decommissioning scheme.

The Bill is necessary as part of an overall package. However, I share the doubts expressed so admirably by my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives about the extent, in theory, of the power being taken in the Bill. I hope that during the passage of the Bill there will be assurances which will enable it to be seen as positive rather than negative as is feared by the industry at present.

7 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which, whilst acknowledging the need for conservation measures, fails to make provision for any compensation for effort limitation in terms of the days at sea restrictions; deeply regrets that the Government have chosen, unnecessarily, to make sea days limitation a prerequisite for a full decommissioning scheme for the fishing fleet; expresses concern that the Government is proceeding with this legislation during a consultation period; and calls on the Government to postpone the legislation until such time as it has been able to take stock of any contributions made to the consultation process."

I noted with some interest the slightly different attitude displayed by the Minister of State when he opened today's debate. He is normally noted for some degree of truculence. I found his contribution today to be positively mild in comparison. I can conclude only that he was almost begging for support, given the weakness of the Bill.

I welcome three things, the first of which is the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait). She said that she would have to do the work of six Members of Parliament in her constituency. If she represents the fishing industry diligently, that ratio will certainly continue with regard to her work in Parliament. More seriously, she referred to low pay in her constituency. That reference was refreshing and welcome because low pay has not always been the highest priority of Conservative Members. If the hon. Lady continues to represent the low paid in her constituency, and particularly the low-paid workers in the fish processing sector, she will make some welcome contributions to our debates on the fishing industry.

Secondly, I welcome the fact that as a by-product of the Bill we are having a full day's debate on the fishing industry. The debate will be well supported. However, it is a source of some regret that the usual channels managed to synchronise this debate with a meeting of the Scottish Grand Committee, which has put so many Scottish Members with constituency fishing interests—such as my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing)—in the difficult position of trying to be in two places at the same

time. The needs and requirements of Scottish Members should be borne in mind when such arrangements are made.

Thirdly, I welcome to the Government Front Bench the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), who is responsible for fisheries in Scotland. His record in the fishing industry has already been mentioned and I hope that I am not damning him with faint praise when I say that hon. Members from fishing constituencies in Scotland hope for a rather more responsive attitude to our comments in the Chamber than perhaps we received from the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who was the hon. Gentleman's predecessor as Commons fisheries spokesman.

Even at this early stage, there are danger signs that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland is in the process of changing from poacher to gamekeeper. We all remember his vigorous speeches from the Opposition Benches in defence of the fisheries industry. The letter that I received from the Under-Secretary of State on 2 June, to which two hon. Members have already referred, was a sign of an intellect in transition in respect of the hon. Gentleman's stance on the fishing industry.

The hon. Gentleman's previous remarks about the industry have been trenchant and robust, but in contrast the letter of 2 June casts a view of the industry which seems to suggest that everything in the past wee while has been a record of sweetness and light. The letter suggested that there is now an elegant inter-relationship in the industry between technical conservation, capacity constraints and effort control, and that we have the best fisheries policy in the best of all worlds. Perhaps when the Under-Secretary of State drafts his own letters and takes a more forceful role as a Minister, I am sure that he will cast his mind back to his own recollection—a memory that I share—of the real history of fishing policy over the past four years.

I remember that four years ago the Scottish Fishermen's Federation produced a raft of conservation measures and appealed for support for some excellent suggestions, but the Government's response was not, as the Under-Secretary of State suggested in his letter, one of constructive appraisal. At first, the Government pretended that the proposals did not exist. There was a full year's hiatus while the Government demanded that the industry put some conservation proposals on the table when the industry had already released a very extensive conservation document.

The Government then went through a secondary phase of blaming Brussels for the mistakes in terms of fisheries policy. *[Interruption.]* I am glad that the Secretary of State for Scotland has joined us. The epitome of that strategy occurred during the compulsory continuous tie-up scheme when Brussels was blamed for the eight-day tie-up, despite the fact that the Secretary of State had described it in this House as another sensible proposal.

The Government also decided to pick and choose which conservation measures to take from the industry's proposals. A good example of that from today's debate is the one-net rule. The Scottish Fishermen's Federation did not propose a one-net rule without the attendant change in the by-catch arrangements which would make that acceptable to the industry. The Government's current approach is not so much a carrot and stick approach as a stick and then the carrot approach. We have primary legislation before us on effort limitation but there is a consultation period in respect of the decommissioning proposals.

The track record in the past four years has not, as the Under-Secretary of State was perhaps forced to suggest in his letter to Scottish Members, been one of sweetness and light and accord in the industry. The track record has been one of exceptionally shabby treatment of one of Scotland's great natural resource industries.

I have agreed with the Minister of State on very few things in fisheries debates over the past three years or so in which he has been a fisheries Minister. I cannot think of a single measure or occasion when we have been anything but almost diametrically opposed in respect of his proposals for the industry, with the sole exception of the 80 mm square mesh panel. For a few brief weeks the Minister of State promoted that very hard. However, after mumblings about it at one Fisheries Council meeting, it was abandoned as a compulsory feature of policy. It now seems to be even disappearing from the industry's research projects.

I do not believe that the Government's track record in the industry accords with the new view of the Under-Secretary of State. At best, the measures on fishing policy have been perverse, often having exactly the opposite effect to that which was originally intended. They have certainly all been confusing.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) asked questions about the maze of regulations which now afflict the white fish fleet. Perhaps I can help him by explaining the no fewer than five different standings under which boats in the white fish fleet can currently sail. For example, a white fish boat could sail with a minimum mesh size of 100 mm and a square mesh optional panel of 90 mm. Alternatively, in the directed whiting fishery, the mesh would be 90 mm. If, on the other hand, the boat fished west of Scotland, it might sail with a minimum mesh size of 80 mm with a square mesh panel of 80 mm. As an alternative to the 135-day tie-up scheme, a vessel could sail with a minimum mesh size of 110 mm and an optional square mesh panel of 100 mm and 67 tie-up-days or a minimum mesh size of 120 mm and an optional square mesh panel of 110 mm and no tie-up days. There are no fewer than five different standards for boats within the white fish fleet in relation to technical conservation.

Therefore, a boat could sail with 100 mm nets, 90 mm nets, or 80 mm nets depending on which area of the fishing grounds it is pursuing. On a cod end, a boat could have a limit of 100 meshes or no limitation at all, depending on the geographical area in which it is fishing. With regard to square mesh panels, depending on the geographical area, a boat could have a 90 mm optional square mesh panel, an 80 mm mandatory square mesh panel, or no requirement at all. In terms of strengthening bags with top-side chafers, there are no restrictions or no overlapping panel, once again depending on the area in which a boat is fishing.

All those regulations affect the white fish fleet at present. It is little wonder that many people in the industry believe that they are being snowed under by regulations which make a sensible framework of policy virtually impossible. It is only surprising that the enforcement proposals will involve additional expenditure of only £4 million. It is equally unsurprising that it is proving impossible to police present regulations and measures when there is such enormous complexity.

[Mr. Alex Salmond]

With such a track record, the Government should start to display just a little humility in their approach to the industry. The argument that the timing of this Bill does not really matter, that we are proceeding with primary legislation during a consultation period because this is just an enabling measure on which we shall get the details later, is one of the weakest arguments that we have heard even from the present Government. Unless we know the policy framework under which the Minister is to pursue his enabling measure, how on earth can we judge whether it is right and proper to give him the powers for which he is asking?

At the very least, the measure should be delayed until after the consultation period. The idea of a consultative period sits very uneasily with the decision to go forward with the unilateral imposition of the one-net rule. As has already been noted, it is having the most perverse effect of setting off a stampede into the white fishery.

The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland has indicated that he will respond to our concerns. I hope that before he sums up the debate he will reflect on how ironic it is to propose legislation on effort limitation while simultaneously, as a by-product of that unilateral imposition, actually increasing effort in the very sector in which he is trying to limit it. The Government are enforcing a unilateral measure in respect of the one-net rule. There is no excuse, pretext, alibi or claim that the measure must go to a Fisheries Council meeting. The Minister is perfectly at liberty to say, "We shall think again about the one-net rule to see whether we can get through the by-catch changes which have been proposed for so long by the Scottish Fishermen's Federation and see whether the proposal can be implemented properly rather than causing the chaos, confusion and the undesirable, perverse effects currently occurring around the coast of Scotland."

As the House will note from our amendment, we also deeply resent the linkage element within the Government's fisheries policy. If, in the teeth of opposition by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, it is now accepted that decommissioning is a legitimate and sensible measure to be part of the overall fisheries policy, surely that measure should be accepted and promoted in its own right as a stand-alone measure and should not depend on the industry swallowing the unacceptable pills in the Bill and in the introduction of transferable quotas.

I certainly agree with the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) that certain aspects of the decommissioning scheme need to be looked at. Overall funding levels do not compare with what was available to other European fleets. The Minister of State said that the scheme that he is working to introduce is more powerful in financial provision than that which had been available to the French fleet. He did not mention the £130 million structural assistance which has gone to other Community fleets in the past three years but which has not been available to United Kingdom fishermen because of the Government's obduracy in refusing to introduce a proper decommissioning scheme. There must be a provision to compensate the crews of fishing vessels.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) and I do not always agree on every aspect of fisheries policy, but I have been very happy to support his campaign for justice for crews in the previous decommissioning scheme about eight years ago. It would be absolute folly, in pursuing a new decommissioning scheme, once again to make no provision for the crews of fishing vessels.

It is deeply resented in the industry that a sensible proposal which has been agreed on the Floor of the House and by most of the fishing industry can be introduced only if and when the industry is prepared to accept the unacceptable, as contained in the measure and in the proposal to move to transferable quotas.

The Minister of State claimed that the transferable quota proposal was not his "pet project", but rather an attempt to introduce market mechanisms into the fishing industry. Hon. Members who have followed the fortunes of the fishing industry in the past few years know all too well that the proposal in the consultation document is an uneasy compromise between the Scottish Office, which has wanted decommissioning for some years but has been resisting transferable quotas, and MAFF in London, which has wanted transferable quotas and market mechanisms but has been resisting decommissioning. The agreement between the two Departments has been to give the industry both. Unless the industry has both, the uneasy compromise between the two Departments will fall apart. I do not see why the industry should be made the victim of the fact that the various fisheries Ministers in their respective Departments cannot agree on fisheries policy and therefore have to browbeat the industry into accepting the unacceptable for the carrot of a decommissioning scheme.

The Minister of State says that transferable quotas are acceptable because it is not really a free market and the measure will be restricted to producer organisations. It is strange to argue for the introduction of market mechanisms in the fishing industry and then to defend that introduction on the basis that it is not really a free market after all. Hon. Members who represent fishing communities are extremely concerned that this will be merely the thin end of the wedge in terms of the final introduction of individual transferable quotas. Eventually, it will lead us—as it has led elsewhere in the world fishing community, for example, in the Bay of Fundy herring fishery in Canada—to a concentration of all quotas in a few hands, rather like the pelagic fleet at present; the white fish fleet will move down the same road, leading to possible destruction of the community-based, share fishing industry of Scotland.

I hope that the Government have noted the opposition on both sides of the House and will take the opportunity to think again about their attitude to the fishing industry. I was struck by the vigorous criticism of the Government's proposals by the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris). It took my mind back to his speech on the Merchant Shipping Bill in 1988, when he made an extremely effective and equally vigorous denunciation of part of the Government's proposals. I remember being rather disappointed, however, that when it came to a vote the hon. Gentleman did not fully follow through the logic of his remarks. Conservative Members who, as a result of lobbying by their respective community fisheries, have serious doubts about the impact and timing of the legislation have available to them an amendment which would send the Government "homeward to think again."

7.19 pm

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for inviting me to make this, my first House of Commons speech. Thank you also for accepting that I have been in and out of the Chamber attending the Scottish Grand Committee which was organised as an extension at fairly short notice at popular request. I might point out that it finished well over an hour ago.

I shall comply with the traditions of the maiden speech, particularly by referring to the pleasurable news which came out at the weekend about my predecessor George Younger, now Lord Younger. It is particularly pleasing to know that his experience will be retained in another place. The valued knowledge that he has gained will be put to good use in our country in the years ahead, I feel sure. His honour is well earned. He was Member of Parliament for Ayr for 28 years. My contact with the electorate on the doorsteps showed a great deal of admiration and respect for George Younger.

There are special thanks for George Younger in my constituency for many things, perhaps none more important than our new hospital, the Ayr hospital, which was opened by the Prime Minister just last week. It is an excellent facility, built to time and built to cost. It is an excellent example of great Scottish civil engineering. Scotland is reputed for many aspects of excellence in engineering. The hospital was planned when George Younger was Secretary of State for Scotland.

The existence of the Craigie teacher training college in my constituency is also thanks to George Younger. It had been threatened with closure by Governments of opposing colours but has been retained thanks to the efforts of George Younger. British Aerospace, too, has been under threat at times, but it is now building Jetstream 31 and Jetstream 41, the only aircraft designed and constructed in Scotland for many years.

British Aerospace was also persuaded to stay in Prestwick by none other than George Younger. Prestwick airport is its base. It is often the only airport in Scotland —and probably in England—to remain open when skies are cloudy and the fog rolls over. The open skies policy presents new opportunities for Prestwick airport, particularly now that a new local company has been established to run it. Who is the chairman? None other than Lord Younger.

Ailsa Perth shipbuilders, which is very much involved in the fishing industry, was at one time threatened by closure under the dead hand of nationalised industry but was saved through a workers co-operative supported by George Younger. It is now prospering, and I suggest that it will do well in the years ahead.

Not only George Younger's constituents have reason to be grateful to him. As a junior Scottish Office Minister and as Secretary of State for Scotland he served the country well. He was recognised as a strong, determined Secretary of State and an achiever. Not only in Scotland but throughout the United Kingdom we owe him a debt, for as Secretary of State for Defence he proved equal to the task. Perhaps one point to remember is his background in the Army and his experience in saving the Argylls. That is a point for our present Secretary of State for Defence, another former excellent Secretary of State for Scotland, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind). Perhaps he should take on board some of George Younger's thoughts in respect of the Royal Scots and the King's Own Scottish Borderers.

My constituency of Ayr has 15 miles of golden beaches. It has two harbours—Ayr fishing and trading harbour, and Troon, where a safe haven provides good mooring for our fishing fleet. Fifteen miles inland good quality farmland embraces the towns of Ayr, Prestwick and Troon and the villages of Loans, Symington, Dundonald, Craigie, Monkton and Tarbolton. It is, to say the least, the heart of Burns country. Robert Burns, the United Kingdom's most celebrated poet, described Ayr people as, "Honest men and bonnie lasses". He was right. Burns was many things but never a fisherman. He was an excise man. Perhaps if he had to take on board today's Bill, he might have been one of the monitors that we seek.

The people of Ayr have a wide range of skills and interests—from city commuters to foundry workers, and from aircraft designers to fishermen. Recently, European Monitors were established in Prestwick freeport. Their reason for settling there, apart from the infrastructure—which is good but could be better, especially if the A70 was turned into a trunk road to benefit our industries as well as fishing—was the excellence of our people. European Monitors are welcome in Ayr.

I also welcome the conservation intentions in the Bill. Many of the measures relate principally to activities in the North sea, but their effects and requirements are of vital importance to the west coast fishermen and especially those on the Clyde. Prawn fishing in those areas runs the risk of over-exploitation. There is a real problem and a risk, not from the traditional fishermen of the area but from fishermen from other other locations. Prawn fishing is key to the activities at Ayr harbour. Loadings are important, but the export aspect is also of great import. There is also an impact on our tourist industry, on which Ayrshire depends. The harbour is a key attraction for tourists throughout the year.

As the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) said, the Clyde fishermen have already taken their own conservation measures. They have imposed a voluntary weekend ban on fishing. Fishermen from the rest of Scotland comply with that ban but, sadly, not all fishermen do so. Some foreign interests still do not observe the ban. I welcome the comment of my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) that this voluntary ban would be taken into consideration in future.

It is hard to understand the amendment tabled by the Scottish National party condemning the efforts at conservation, particularly in view of the history of discussions in Europe in which it was suggested that tie-up was the thing. British Ministers opposed that vigorously and we now have achieved a flexible solution.

I draw the attention of the House to the single-rig-multi-rig option. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) suggested that there was confusion in ministerial ranks on the issue, but when I talk to the fishermen, certainly in the Clyde, I find a certain degree of confusion among them. There is a 50:50 split on whether to go for single-rig or multi-rig. I believe that dual rigs have certain advantages. Bearing in mind environmental issues and quotas, dual rigs would cut down fishing time at sea to obtain similar volume catches. I believe that there

[Mr. Phil Gallie]

are savings to be found in using diesel. The dual rig system would bring important financial savings to fishermen. I wonder about the wisdom of the single-rig philosophy.

I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) might well consider a change of date for the imposition of single-rig. I am sure that all hon. Members would welcome that today.

I am also concerned at the unilateral nature of the Bill and about the fact that United Kingdom fishermen will be obliged to comply but others will not. Once again, I am encouraged by the words of my hon. Friend the Minister, who said that discussions were under way with the southern Irish about the management of stocks in the Irish sea and on the west coast. I am sure that that will be welcome.

I do not turn my back on the £25 million in cash which will be available for decommissioning—I welcome it. Scottish Members have been asking for just such a programme for years, and it would seem churlish to criticise today. However, having said that I welcome decommissioning, it has another side. There is a feeling in the fishing industry on the west coast that some support for family boats could have been sustained. I recognise the impracticalities of that. Probably I am impractical in believing that some advantage could be gained by decommissioning boats on the east coast and allowing transfer with subsequent west coast stand down.

I suggest that decommissioning and conservation measures can never be popular, especially in the fishing industry, but the long-term interests of the industry are at stake, and I support the Government's intentions in the Bill.

7.30 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I congratulate the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) on a forceful and vigorous speech, which was all the more effective for its strong defence of local interests. Fishing does not have enough advocates and defenders in the House. It needs the vigour with which he effectively defended the industry today. It is always possible for hon. Members to pursue the defence of those interests in the Lobby after the debate, and I am sure that the Government Whips will extend some indulgence to a new Member who is vigorously defending the interests of his fishermen.

The hon. Member for Ayr made a powerful contribution to the debate, and we concur with his praise for his predecessor, who was a nephew of one of my predecessors, Kenneth Younger, who made an important contribution to the House. I also welcome the hon. Member's praise of Robbie Burns, not because I have much knowledge of his poetry—my knowledge is limited to third degree Burns—but because he was a socialist and preached socialism in much of his poetry. It is good to know that the hon. Member is an enthusiast of Burns.

We all enjoyed the speech of the hon. Member for Ayr, unlike the Bill that we are debating, which is not merely retrograde but disastrous. If we pass it, we shall give Ministers a blank cheque—an authorisation slowly to strangle the fishing industry, which is important to us all.

I am sorry that the Minister of State is associated with the Bill. I congratulate him, in his absence, on his promotion. He has been an effective Minister with responsibility for fishing, whose interest in the industry we have all welcomed. He has been one of the best Ministers for fishing and has certainly taken a closer interest in the industry than many of his predecessors. It is a shame that he is marring that record with the Bill, because it puts him completely at variance with the industry, which was not consulted about the measure. It is no good saying that the industry will be consulted now. Retrospective consultation, while we are debating the measure, is no more than a request for a blank cheque.

The fishing industry is extremely angry and has united against the measure in a way which we have never known before. In long years of dealing with the industry it has always been disunited, as the hon. Member for Ayr said, and it has had a series of discordant voices urging different things, but it is totally united in opposition to the measure.

The Bill is disastrous because it goes down the wrong path. It pursues the dead-end street of control, regulation and bureaucratisation. The Minister might call it socialism, but I would call it the Delorisation of the fishing industry. It is the opposite of socialism, which sets people free. It is bureaucracy, control and restriction of the industry, based on the simple-minded equation that the way to cut catches is to remedy the Government's failure to cut the fleet through a proper decommissioning scheme, which should have been introduced several years ago. That is why we have to deal with this Bill—it is ministerial failure. The Government are trying to cut catches by cutting the amount of time that vessels can spend at sea, and that is a daft way to go about it.

The Bill will not be effective and it will put the British industry—including the Grimsby industry, with which I am concerned—at a serious disadvantage compared with that of our European competitors. We are asking the industry to compete with a ball and chain around its leg. While it is shackled because of the number of days that vessels can spend at sea, our European competitors will be competing for the same catches on the same grounds. However, their catches are not as closely monitored and controlled. Judging by evidence of arrests and prosecutions in Grimsby, many of our competitors do not keep proper log books and a proper account of their catches. They are not controlled, but our vessels' days at sea will be limited. The Bill will help our competitors, and fishing is a competitive industry.

The Bill will not affect stocks because our competitors will catch the stocks that our vessels are not catching. It will be particularly helpful to those flagships—the quota hoppers which are now registered as British—which fish from European ports but catch the British quota. How will their performance, in terms of days at sea, be controlled by the measure? When the Under-Secretary sums up, I hope that he will tell us how the quota hoppers will be policed and how their days at sea will be monitored.

Dutch quota hoppers have caught substantial amounts of plaice, and as a result the catches of Grimsby vessels, which catch plaice in season and in due proportion, have had to be limited because of over-catching by beamers. Quota hoppers will have to be limited, but as they land their catches overseas and are hardly accountable in this country, I do not understand how they can be effectively controlled.

The Bill merely shackles the fishing industry and interferes with its economics. It will be totally disruptive. If, as we are told, the aim is a 30 per cent. cut in effort, how will it affect the economics for each fisherman and fishing

company, especially the larger, commercially-competitive companies on which we depend for catches in distant waters? The Bill will be as disruptive for them as for the smaller Grimsby vessels, which are barely profitable. Their catches are down and their receipts in the market have not proportionately increased. The smaller fishermen are staggering along. They are keeping going, but they will be held back when the limit on days at sea is introduced.

If one translates the 30 per cent. cut into the economics of income per vessel, the economics of a company and the viability of the industry, the effect will be disastrous. The result will be restructuring by bankruptcy and by liquidation. In compensation for the Government's failure to produce a proper decommissioning system and a managed restructuring of the industry, haphazard bankruptcies will be enforced because of the limits imposed by the Bill.

There has been no study of the Bill's effect on the economics and viability of the industry. Why not? Why cannot Ministers tell us how the Bill will affect vessels and the industry? Because they have not studied it. It is a leap in the dark, and the Minister is asking us to sanction it because he has wanted for so long to save money on decommissioning.

The Bill will have dangerous results. Vessels will put to sea in worse condition. Worst of all, it will not help conservation. When vessels are allowed to go to sea they will go flat out to catch the maximum numbers, and it will not matter what species they catch. They will not target fish or go to specific areas to get them. They will go where they can to catch sufficient numbers, whether they be small or large fish. Vessels will have to make the maximum catch in the shortest possible time to use their gear to the maximum. By using larger crews or more intensive gear, it is possible to increase the catch. Nets could be in the water more destructively, and for longer, despite the days-at-sea limitation.

The Bill is not an effective conservation measure but will penalise conservation-conscious ports such as Grimsby whose fishermen have always used a bigger mesh net. Grimsby vessels use up to a 125 mm mesh because they practise selective catching—they want the largest, best, and most marketable fish. In future, they will be forced to catch as much fish as possible in the time that they have at sea, just to fill up.

Worst of all, the Bill will stop the search for other, more effective conservation-conscious solutions. Quotas are in themselves a bad way of controlling catches. They lead to discards and to political manipulation. In the past, we insisted on quotas, and now we seek a limit on the number of days at sea. We have not considered technical measures that could be far more effective in achieving proper conservation.

The fishing effort is more directly related to the type of gear, the way that it is used, and the size of the mesh, than it is to the number, horsepower, or tonnage of the vessels involved. The Bill is a national measure, so it should justify the search for national conservation measures. Why not consider even bigger mesh sizes?

Why not insist on the square panel? Why has square mesh research been left so late, and why has so much of it been left to the industry? Why not go ahead with square mesh panels, which John Ashworth's research indicates are an effective way of improving conservation, by allowing smaller fish to escape? Why not ban any gear that stops the escape of small fish?

Clearly, industrial fishing must be phased out. Fishing for human consumption must take priority. Why not ban industrial fishing altogether rather than seek conservation by a measure such as the Bill, with its disastrous effects on the British industry? Why not restrict beam trawling, with its destructive effects on the sea bed? Other measures could include the closure of specific grounds, and the observance of specific trawling bans in spawning seasons.

The industry is anxious to consult and is desperate to be heard. It has proposed solutions and conservation measures, and has itself financed a good deal of the research that should have been undertaken by the Government. Why has all that been left to the industry? Why has it not been consulted about effective conservation measures? Instead, it has had imposed on it blanket legislation. Why is the industry being asked to make the sacrifices that it is, and to risk bankruptcies and liquidations, because the Minister has not been successful in getting money for a decommissioning scheme from the Treasury all these years?

I speak almost obsessively of the Bill's effect on Grimsby, because during my time as its Member of Parliament I have witnessed the decimation of its fishing industry by the loss of distant waters opportunities. That of Iceland occurred before I was elected, but the consequences are still being felt. I watched the industry fight back, and reconstruct and reorganise itself as a nearer-water, small-vessel industry. Its prospect grew better until the late 1980s, when it faced a slow run-down, a reduction in catches, and a return that has not been enough to keep the vessels viable. The industry is now threatened.

We need a fishing industry concentrated in places such as Grimsby, which serve as centres of fishing excellence offering the right training and facilities. They support the market and offer a concentration of fishing that is now threatened. The industry needs the support of local communities to recruit fishermen.

The consequences of the Bill will fall particularly on share fishermen—on the badly paid crews who make a return for part of the year, but who often arrive home in debt. I receive letters from fishermen's wives asking, "Why is it that my husband can be sent to sea and come back owing the company large sums of money?" When a vessel has made little money, the crews earn hardly anything from the option of share fishing. Their catches will be cut by the Bill, and that will be disastrous for Grimsby.

The Bill will benefit quota hoppers, Dutch beamers, and Spanish vessels. They have the commercial power and the financial strength to buy up licences as British fishing vessels are driven into liquidation. It is appalling that Ministers are not examining ways of controlling quota hoppers through the tax regime and by regulating landings in this country. It is particularly appalling at a time when the Government are imposing the death by a thousand cuts that the Bill represents.

As Members of Parliament who represent ports and a fishing industry that is under-represented in the politics of this country, it is our responsibility to protect, nurture, defend, and sustain those ports through this difficult period so that they can be kept going as part of a viable, competitive industry, to inherit better catches in the better times that must lie ahead if we can get the conservation aspect straight. The Bill will not get it straight. It is a garotte that will be drawn tighter and tighter year by year. Ministers will find new ways of making surreptitious cuts

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

by tightening that garotte around the neck of the fishing industry to the point of total strangulation. It is not our job to give Ministers a blanket authorisation to garotte the fishing industry that we are here to defend.

7.47 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) on his excellent maiden speech. I was particularly interested in his remarks about the aircraft industry, of which I have some knowledge. He is right to say that the two aircraft that are built at Prestwick have a huge future ahead of them—particularly in the American export market. I am certain that many jobs will be created by the success of the Jetstream 41 in particular. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) on her very good maiden speech. I am sure that we shall hear a great deal more from both of them in the coming weeks and months.

Many right hon. and hon. Members have aired their views and worries about the Bill. Before I do so, I wish to make a couple of general points. Whenever we debate the fishing industry, we run up against the fact that it is in many ways hopelessly over-regulated, and whenever we attempt to even the balance, we end up producing even more measures which make it even harder for many fishermen to earn a living.

We are now up against the problem of making things fair for fishermen in this country. We have no means of controlling the way in which foreign fishermen, or fishermen in other European Community countries, fish our own quota. I thought that the Minister's use of the word "subsidiarity" in this case was slightly misplaced. I am a great believer in the operation of the principle of subsidiarity throughout the European Community, but I think that the fishing industry is an exception. I would much prefer to see more uniformity in that industry across the Community so that we do not allow for the genuinely justified suspicion that, while we abide by the rules on quotas and the various methods of protecting our stocks, other nations have a slightly different view of how the regulations should be interpreted and applied. Across the board in the Community, from fishery protection duties to the number of people onshore checking the quotas and the amount of the catch that passes through a port, one sees considerable variations in the way in which regulations are applied. It will be difficult to ensure the uniform application of the days-at-sea proposal. If such uniform application is not obtained, it is likely that our fishermen will raise grievances because they will be forced to apply the rules others do not.

In my port of Fleetwood, we have, from the start, always been keen on measures to conserve stocks and in that respect we have a good record. The fact remains that the long-term viability of our industry depends on increased stability and consistency in the future. It is difficult enough to make a living out of fishing these days, but it has become much harder when the rules and the goalposts are changing almost by the month. If that happens, it is difficult to encourage new blood into the industry and ensure that the people who have invested in it already have the opportunity to obtain a fair return on that investment.

In that respect, I was pleased to note that the Government have finally come round to the view that we should have a decommissioning scheme. I know many people say that the scheme is too small and too late, and in some ways that view is justified. It is absolutely right that if the scheme had been introduced earlier we would not now be faced with other measures to reduce effort and preserve stocks. Nevertheless, I welcome the scheme and sincerely hope that it will be an effective method of reducing the size of the fleet while—at the same time—making it possible for the remaining vessels and fishermen to become more viable and thus able to take advantage of any new openings which may occur. From that point of view, I am convinced that it is a good idea.

I also urge the Minister to consider the cash limit if, in the future, it is shown that we can reduce effort and bring the amount of fishing more into line with the fish available by pushing a little more cash into the decommissioning scheme. That is a more effective way of producing a long-term and viable fishing industry than some of the other measures that have been mentioned. I hope that the Government will at least leave that door slightly open, bearing in mind the comments made by a number of hon. Members, and particularly the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), on the cost to the Treasury of the scheme. We have heard all sorts of figures, but I do not think that they will be quite so large as some of the figures that we have heard from the Government today.

I welcome the introduction of a scheme for licensing vessels of less than 10 m. Clearly, that will get rid of the loophole which for the past few years has allowed some vessels to take easy advantage, whereby a new class of vessels of less than 10 m was introduced to get round the old system of licences for vessels of more than 10 m. Provided that that measure is used sensibly, it should have an effect on the amount of effort and the amount of fish caught in certain fisheries, particularly my own in the Irish sea.

The technical measures on the size of nets are welcome, as are the thoughts on grading machines, which I hope will result in fewer discards than has been the case recently. It is frustrating for fishermen to have to cast back into the sea large numbers of dead fish which simply float on the surface but cannot be fished because they are too small. It has been suggested that the grading machine rules should be revised, which is a good idea.

The most controversial and important part of the Bill is the days-at-sea and tie-up arrangements. My main worry on that method of reducing effort is the arbitrary way in which it is likely to achieve its purpose, if it does so at all. It will be almost impossible for the regulatory system to provide fairness and for that method of reducing effort to work properly. One of the key problems has already been mentioned. Fishermen, when they are allowed to fish, will have the perverse incentive to catch anything that they can, which will counteract some of the other measures designed to preserve stock. More of certain species will be caught than would otherwise be the case, because fishermen will rightly want to make the maximum attempt to fish wherever they can when they are allowed to do so.

The other problem is that in some parts of the country it is possible, because of the larger vessels in some ports, to counter-balance and make allowance for the effects of the tie-up regulations. Many of those ports will not be affected so much as others. I am particularly conscious of that in relation to my port of Fleetwood, which has a relatively

old and small fleet. I am worried that its fishermen will put out to sea in conditions in which they would not normally do so simply in order to make ends meet. The tie-up may have a serious effect on safety and it will operate arbitrarily. I do not think that, ultimately, it will have a huge effect on the amount of fishing effort that takes place.

I acknowledge that the Government have taken the view that the Bill must form part of a much larger package to reduce effort and to preserve stocks, but I have yet to be convinced that it will work in the way the Government suggest. I urge the Minister to consider the way in which the enabling power will apply and to try to ensure that there will be at least a degree of fairness so that there will not be bankruptcy for some fishermen, as mentioned by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), while others remain unaffected. That must be avoided at all costs. If we are to have effective means of preserving stocks, we must have a system which applies the agony evenly across the country and between ports.

I welcome the Government's conversion to the idea of decommissioning, as it is something that many Conservative Members as well as Opposition Members have advocated for some time. The Government are going in the right direction and I also welcome the other aspects of the Bill, such as the technical and licensing measures. However, I have still to be convinced that the measures on tie-up and days at sea will be effective. I hope that we shall have more scientific evidence to prove that they will be effective before they are put into practice.

7.59 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Those of us who read the Bill and then listened carefully to the Minister's response under cross-examination wondered whether we were discussing the same measure. It would probably be more fruitful for our debate if we could adjourn, read the Minister's response to the questions put to him, and then have a meaningful debate, not on what the Bill says but on the Minister's intentions. The cause and effect of the Bill will be determined not by the content or the written word but by that which does not appear: the regulations and the interpretations that the Minister will place on them. Indeed, in response to my question he gratuitously introduced an important measure. He undertook to set up an appeals procedure which would, I presume, be used to obviate the greatest injustices that will be created by the Bill.

The fishing industry in Northern Ireland has no doubt that the Bill will have far-reaching consequences. Some members of the Northern Ireland fisheries producers organisation have told me that it represents the most dramatic change since the Magna Carta. I stood back in amazement and thought that that was a gross exaggeration, but then I thought about it. The right to fish in the Irish sea from the ports of South Down, Kilkeel and Ardglass have existed since long before the Magna Carta and, for the first time in their lives, fishermen will be proscribed by law from obtaining their livelihoods from the sea, as they have done for centuries.

It is sad that the Bill has been introduced without the Government having fulfilled proper consultation with the various regional fish producers organisations, which we would normally expect when such dramatic measures are taken. Much has been made of the fact that the Bill is unilateral and would not apply to other EC countries. I see the irony of that more than other hon. Members because my constituency of South Down has a water border with the Republic of Ireland. It is five miles from the major fishing port of Kilkeel, so that five miles away boats will put out to sea without that restriction. I did not catch all of the Minister's remarks about his consultation with the Government of the Irish Republic and the subject matters that were covered, but it was clear that they covered that very subject. If they were not, that would be a gross anomaly, with the fishing fleets from Portavogie, Ardglass and Kilkeel putting out to fish with a grave disadvantage compared with those that leave from a port five miles down the coast.

Equally important to me, because of the type of industry that pertains in Northern Ireland, is the fact that the communities there that devote their time to fishing depend almost entirely on fishing and processing the products of the sea for the economic infrastructure of their towns. Severe damage will be done not just to the industry but to the communities that the industry has served so well and so faithfully over many centuries.

All of us subscribe to the need for conservation measures. Indeed, all the fishermen to whom I have spoken subscribe to that need. We are arguing about the most effective and fair way to accomplish those measures. The lack of decommissioning schemes has been one of the major contributing factors to the need to introduce such a draconian scheme. It is based on the fact that the fish producers organisations and many hon. Members including myself have, over the years, repeatedly asked the Government to introduce a meaningful decommissioning scheme in consultation with the industry and those who subscribe, as the fish would, to conservation.

As for the Bill's practicality, one of the most reasonable steps for the Government to have taken before introducing such a strong measure would have been to make a scientific assessment of the scheme's effect. It would be scientific in the sense of its effect on conservation, and scientific-economic in the sense of its effect on the industry and the communities that depend on it. It is ludicrous that the Bill should be introduced without that basic information being available to the Government.

The Bill is open-ended in terms of the ministerial power that it bestows. I shall read avidly the Minister's responses under cross-examination when he opened the debate because there is much more in what he promised than there is in the Bill. It would have been logical and proper for the Bill to have contained the most important of the undertakings that have been given verbally tonight. It is probably ironic that, at this moment in another place, the Law Lords are debating the validity of statements by Ministers outside the consideration of Bills. I look forward to hearing their decision.

The Bill's viability must be questioned. Will it achieve what it sets out to achieve? One of the first steps that the Government could have taken was to take out of circulation those parts of the industry that wished to go voluntarily. Having accomplished that, they could then have seen what the shortfall was before deciding how to legislate for it. People who are now being pressed to the wall economically because of the quota systems would be willing—nay, anxious—to get out of the fishing industry had the Government given them an even handshake as they would in any other industry by way of compensation, support or set-aside.

[Mr. Eddie McGrady]

A direct consequence of the Bill is that the most effective fishermen will not necessarily survive. There will be redundancies and fall-out in terms of people employed in the industry and those will not necessarily involve the most effective side of the industry. Those who will survive best will be those who are not totally committed to it. That will have a counter effect on an industry in competition with foreign fishing fleets, and the double jeopardy is that foreign fishing fleets will not be restricted by the Bill.

Some hon. Members have mentioned safety. I have no doubt that, once the Bill is enacted, skippers and crews who depend on the sea for their livelihood will increase the risk that they already take and either stay at sea longer in unsuitable and unsafe conditions, or will put out from port in conditions that they would otherwise not risk, to try to achieve the maximum catch to make themselves a viable economic unit. The fishing industry is like any other—if it is not a viable economic unit, it goes to the wall financially.

Another aspect of the Bill that weighs heavily with most of the fishermen to whom I speak is that of the bureaucracy that will be created. In the notes attached to the Bill there is a small comment about the number of jobs required and the cost of them. If the measure is to be effective, properly policed and adhered to, we should multiply that number by any figure from three to five. If it is not, there will be grave injustice.

The Bill is grossly unfair to the industry as a whole. Any other industry faced with the need to cut its production and act in the interests of others—including conservationists, environmentalists and ourselves—would be entitled to ask for reasonable compensation. Many other industries in this country are presently polluting the environment, and the reason they give for not introducing anti-pollution measures is that they would not be cost effective. If it is not cost effective for Sellafield, for example, to introduce maximum environmental protection mechanisms, the same could be argued for the fishing industry. Indeed, I would go further and say that the maximum cost should be met by the Government.

The Bill is not capable of being properly amended. As the Minister made clear in his opening remarks, the Bill contains many regulations and he has had to give many undertakings to the House to ensure that the Bill is sensible and practical. Therefore, I believe that the honest and proper thing to do would be to tear up the Bill and start again after full consultation with the fishing industry. That will not be done, but I believe that it is the right thing to do.

8.12 pm

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in tonight's debate. As the new Member of Parliament representing Scarborough and Whitby, I am following in the footsteps of Sir Michael Shaw, who was our Member of Parliament for 26 years. He is universally popular and has exerted great influence over the constituency. From speaking to many people in Parliament, I know that Sir Michael is held in high esteem, both as an individual and as a parliamentarian. He was a long-standing member of the Chairmen's Panel and a member of the Public Accounts Committee and the Select Committee on Selection. When I was a new candidate, Sir Michael was helpful, and I know that I shall be able to call on his advice in years to come.

As well as their craggy, 45-mile coastline, Scarborough and Whitby also boast some of England's most magnificent countryside: the wild, rugged north Yorkshire moors, valleys forged millions of years ago by glaciers, and rolling wolds which are efficiently tended by hard-working farmers, whose forebears have tended the land for 1,500 years. In all, the district is an excellent touring base for holidaymakers.

Scarborough and Whitby have also played an important role in shaping our nation's history. Captain Cook, who discovered New Zealand, had connections with Whitby. I take it as a tribute to the ancient fishing town and its people that the American space shuttle, Endeavour, was named in honour of Captain Cook and his ship, which was built in the boatyards of Whitby all those years ago. As the shuttle travelled the heavens recently, it carried within its space-age hold the rudder from the original ship, Endeavour.

It is said that Whitby was once England's sixth largest port, and that it was also the first town in the country to benefit from street lighting, due to the plentiful supply of whaling oil. Travelling even further back in time, in 665 the synod of Whitby marked a turning point in the development of the Church of England. Its decision to follow Roman usages rather than Celtic usages brought the English church into much closer contact with the continent—perhaps that was an early version of "ever-closer union". That policy backfired when the English jettisoned the idea of ever-closer union during the reign of Henry VIII and the Reformation. That is a good reason for the European Community to hold its next summit in Whitby. Caedmon—pronounced Cadman—who lived in Whitby until he died in 680, is acknowledged by many to be England's first poet.

Whitby is bounded by the sea on one side and the north Yorkshire moors on the other. Most of the region comes under the control of the national park, about whose activities I receive more complaints in my postbag than anything else. The town has retained all its charm and escaped the excesses of 1960s and 1970s architecture. If one sails out of Whitby harbour and looks back, there will be little in one's view of the town that one's 19th century counterpart would not have seen had he or she undertaken a similar voyage.

Travelling further down the coast, passing the beautiful village of Robin Hood's Bay, one arrives in Scarborough. The headland was first used by the Romans as a warning station. I am glad to say that we make our visitors from Glasgow far more welcome these days. The Vikings prevailed in the end and Scarborough became a 10th century fishing village, taking its name from the Nordic chief who settled there, Skarthi. In the 12th century a Norman keep was built near the present castle.

An interesting factor about Scarborough and Whitby, which form one of Yorkshire's most beautiful constituencies, is that a slice of it is owned by the Duke of Lancaster. That was because Henry III's son Edmund received from his father the honour of Pickering and the manor of Scalby in 1267, at much the same time as he was granted the earldom of Lancaster, the land of which now comprises the Duchy. Therefore, I hasten to assure my hon. Friends

from Lancashire that what I have told them is merely the result of historical continuity, not some great Lancastrian feat of arms during the Wars of the Roses.

Richard III, Lord of Scarborough, visited us in 1484 to review his fleet and subsequently granted us our town charter, the motto of which is "Loyalty Binds Me"—a fact that the Whips have already brought to my attention. Northstead manor in Peasholm was held by Richard III. As with the stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds, a Member of Parliament who wishes to resign may apply for the stewardship of the Manor of Northstead—another fact that has been brought to my attention by the Whips.

In 1626 the spa was developed, so we can claim to be England's first resort. The town has many fine buildings due to Edward VII's patronage. It is a town with a proud royal heritage.

Another heritage of which we in Scarborough and Whitby are justly proud is that of the fishing industry—a heritage that spans 1,000 years. I call the fishermen in my constituency my floating voters, but not in the democratic sense. I have had experience of the fishing industry and of what the fishermen go through so that we may enjoy fish on our tables. I went to sea with Bob Walker, the skipper of the Jan Denise, on a rough night. It was a distinctly queasy experience.

The fishermen of Scarborough and Whitby are also feeling uneasy about the exact operation of the days-at-sea regulations that the Bill will allow the Minister to impose on them. I urge the Minister to take account of the fact that, if the days-at-sea regulations are to be based on 1991 figures, many fishermen in my constituency will be doubly disadvantaged as they were already under the days-at-sea restrictions in that year. Therefore, they could be facing restrictions on restrictions. Will the Minister consider the case of a fisherman in Scarborough who was said to have taken his boat out in order to assist a colleague whose boat was in trouble, only to find on his return that his mercy mission would be counted by officials as one of his days at sea?

It must also be remembered that, for safety reasons, smaller boats of less than 10 m are unable to set out in the adverse weather conditions that the larger vessels may risk. Will the Minister bear that in mind if he sets restrictions for smaller boats? All of us in Scarborough accept the need for conservation measures, but we also feel that we should press for measures to curb industrial fishing. Some of the factory ships trawl with nets which have mouths large enough to accommodate 12 jumbo jets merely to obtain fishmeal to produce animal feed. I hope that the EC—if there is to be one after last week—can get to grips with this conservation problem. In the meantime, we are proud of our fishermen in Scarborough and Whitby. They are extremely hard-working, and they deserve to be able to plan for a better and more certain future.

I have spoken of the living heritage derived from the fishermen and the livelihood. Let me also say something about the economic and cultural aspects of life in the area, and about the correlation between the two sectors. Although 25 per cent. of the population are enjoying their retirement in my constituency, it is also a place of opportunity for the young and for families. We have a thriving and innovative business community: technology and goods are exported from our towns to all four corners of the earth.

Pindar Graphics, based in Scarborough, prints many of the women's magazines that are currently available—and the Yellow Pages! McCains sells its oven chips, and other products, all over the world, using locally grown stock. Plaxtons leads Europe in the technology and innovation involved in coach building. I could mention many other companies.

We all hope for an early start to the A64 road improvement scheme, which will ease the flow of goods out and the flow of visitors in. I mention visitors because tourism is a vital part of our life. My constituency is a great holiday and conference centre. It enjoys some of the cleanest beaches in Europe, and it also has a longer summer season than any other holiday town. The Black and White Minstrels first performed in Scarborough, and Benny Hill was a regular visitor in his early days—before his blue period.

The north Yorkshire moors steam railway attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year, and the television series "Heartbeat" is filmed in the nearby village of Goathland. Bram Stoker's chilling tale of Dracula was set in Whitby, and even as we speak the famous and ancient Scarborough Fayre is taking place. I look forward to a return visit to Scarborough by the Prime Minister; perhaps he will attend our excellent Scarborough cricket festival, a major event in the cricketing calendar, and while he is there he may possibly visit the Stephen Joseph theatre in the round. Alan Ayckbourn premieres all his plays there, and it is where that great playwright does so much to encourage new talent and to bring the arts to ordinary people.

In the short time available, I have tried to convey an impression of the quality of life in my constituency—of the beauty, excitement and tradition that exist there. I hope that many right hon. and hon. Members will take the opportunity to visit us, and to see the constituency for themselves. They will be most welcome; but, just as important, they will discover the unique sense of identity of which all of us in Yorkshire are justly proud.

That is why I hope that, one day soon, our Government will abolish Cleveland and Humberside, so that my county and its ridings can be restored and Yorkshire can again stretch from the Humber to the Tees, as it once did for a thousand years.

8.22 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I congratulate the hon. Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) on a fluent, entertaining and informative speech about his constituency, which also contained a sting in the tail for the Government in regard to the Bill. I have had the pleasure of meeting the hon. Gentleman, and I know that he comes from a manufacturing family background. I am sure that that will enable him to make a valuable contribution to future debates.

Before I deal with the Bill, let me raise a specific issue that threatens to dig a large hole in it. I refer to fisheries conservation. Last week, a judgment was made in Stornoway sheriff court that seemed to suggest that the Fishery Limits Act 1976 did not provide the protection that it had been thought to provide—protection, that is, against foreign vessels entering United Kingdom waters. It was decided that, when such vessels entered our territorial waters with the intention of fishing, they were not breaching the legislation.

Apparently, that loophole was exposed as long ago as 1983, and it comes as something of a shock to find that the

[Mr. Calum Macdonald]

Government have taken no action to close it. A Spanish vessel registered in Panama, for instance, can fish our waters without hindrance. I hope that the Scottish Office Minister who winds up the debate will explain why nothing was done about that earlier, and that he will tell us what the Government now intend to do.

No one has yet mentioned the increasing pressure that is being placed on lobster and crab stocks in United Kingdom waters. A working party was set up recently by the Sea Fish Industry Authority, including not only representatives of the industry but Government scientists. It produced an excellent report, which mentioned the increasing pressure to which I have referred. I particularly admired the report's approach to the need to tackle and reduce that pressure: it recommended a combination of national guidelines and regional implementation, by means of regional fishery committees.

The report pointed out that such arrangements did not yet exist in Scotland. I believe that such a system—national guidelines, along with the exercise of effort limitation on a regional basis—is appropriate, not just for the crab and lobster fishery but for United Kingdom fisheries in general. I hope that the Government will adopt the report's recommendations about the shell fishery, and that those that are seen to work well are subsequently extended to other areas. I also hope that the Minister will discuss the recommendations when he winds up, and will tell us when the Government hope to respond to them. In fishery debates, I have constantly stressed the need for a policy that is sensitive to the regional differences around the United Kingdom coastline—around the Scottish coastline, indeed—and I am delighted that the working party has taken up the issue.

It is important to distinguish not only between regional features of the United Kingdom, but between different kinds of fleet and different kinds of fishing. There is, for instance, an important distinction to be drawn between inshore and offshore fleets. I do not consider it fair to impose uniform effort limitation regulations across the industry; a distinction must be made between those two fleets. I wish to illustrate the difference by referring to two aspects of the Bill and the regulations that the Government have recently produced: the one-net rule, and the days-at-sea restriction.

A number of objections have been made to the one-net rule across the board, but it is clearly much more damaging to the smaller inshore fleet than it is to other parts of the United Kingdom fleet. The fishermen in my constituency are seriously concerned about the effect of the one-net rule, unless there is an adjustment to the by-catch restrictions. Without such an adjustment, the Western Isles fishery will be destroyed.

If I may explain why they have that fear—which is genuine, not exaggerated—the Western Isles prawn fishery depends upon a certain amount of white fish by-catch. Fishermen in the Western Isles fish for prawns during the day and switch to fishing for white fish during the hours of darkness. That policy can be pursued fairly well during the summer months, but I am sure that the Minister will appreciate that during the winter months the hours of daylight in the Western Isles are very short. Therefore, fishing for white fish becomes all-important for the local fleet during the winter months, between October and March.

At the moment, local fishermen enjoy the privilege of having valuable prawn grounds in close proximity to good white fish grounds. They are between four and eight miles apart. As the hours of darkness begin, the fleet can easily switch from one fishery to the other. If, however, the one-net rule is introduced without any flexibility, the boats will be required to steam all the way back to harbour where their nets will have to be changed before they can return and fish for white fish. The steaming time is between six and eight hours. It would be impossible for boats of under 400 hp to do that. Local inshore fleet boats are usually under 400 hp. A serious threat, therefore, faces the Western Isles fishing fleet.

It is important to distinguish between inshore and offshore fleets. Apart from the effect that this rule would have on the inshore fleet, one has to remember that inshore fleets have hardly any impact upon the overfishing of white fish. For example, the Western Isles fleet accounts for less than 1 per cent. of the total allowable catch of white fish off the west coast. The whole of that catch is taken during the winter months. The fleet is then absolutely dependent upon its white fish catch for survival. In no way can the Western Isles fleet be considered to be causing a problem in the white fish category, yet its dependence upon that category in the winter months is critical. To remove the fleet's capacity to go after white fish might destroy the fleet. Local fishermen have expressed their serious concern about that to me. I do not believe that their concern is exaggerated.

There are ways to get round the problem. One way would be to grant a by-catch restriction exemption for smaller boats. Boats of under 400 hp could be exempted from the by-catch restriction. Alternatively, separated trawls could be made exempt from the by-catch restriction. I am told that the use of separated trawls has led to exemption from the European Community by-catch restriction in the Bay of Biscay, so that could be done without changing the EC by-catch rules.

An argument can also be made for trying to use the United Kingdom's presidency of the Council to change some of the by-catch rules, in particular the by-catch rule that affects non-protected species such as dogfish and skate. It makes no sense to include those categories within the by-catch restriction.

I understand that other hon. Members want to speak, so I intend to confine my final remarks to the days-at-sea restriction. Uniform imposition of the days-at-sea restriction across the whole of the fishery makes no sense when one takes into account the differences between the offshore and inshore sectors. In particular, simply to freeze everything at 1991 levels is unfair to those fleets that are not seven day a week, 24 hour a day, double crew fleets but that already pursue a much more moderate, conservationist style of fishing. Account ought to be taken of that fact.

To return to a suggestion that I have made frequently in the House, the Government ought to implement the weekend ban on prawn fishing on the west coast. The prawn fishermen are themselves calling for such a ban. It would cost the Government nothing, it would be easy to enforce, and it would reduce fishing time by 30 per cent. —much more than the days-at-sea restriction called for by the Government.

Although there are many other points that I wish to raise, I am sure that I shall have the opportunity to do so in Committee.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It may help hon. Members if I announce that the wind-up speeches will start at 9.20. Short speeches will therefore ensure that more hon. Members can make a contribution.

8.36 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): I appreciate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you have urged hon. Members to make short speeches. I am grateful to have this opportunity before the end of the debate to make the only speech on behalf of an entire region—East Anglia.

Three of my hon. Friends have made excellent maiden speeches. The presence of new Members of Parliament in the first fisheries debate of this new Parliament is very welcome. As the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) said, the same Members of Parliament tend to discuss all offshore matters—coastal protection, health and safety, sea pollution and anything to do with the oceans—including, even, Maxwell's helicopters. Quite often, we find agreement across the Chamber. Occasionally, we find that whoever is sitting on the Treasury Bench agrees with us. I fear, however, that tonight there will be no such agreement.

Following last week's excitements when the supertanker of the European state took a hole very near the water line, it is tempting, feeling as I do against any deepening of Europe beyond a free-trading entity, to rock the boat a little more tonight and get some more water through that hole. Assuredly enough, the Bill is a very small link in the European chain that anchors a once proud and mighty British industry to that insensitive tanker.

As *Fishing News* of 29 May said:

"To limit the days a fisherman is allowed to spend at sea is to restrict his ability to make a return on the capital he has invested . . . Where is the compensation in all this for those who can't live on their ration of days at sea?"

That is just one of several questions to which we have had no answers tonight.

To turn to the question of why the Bill is being rushed into Parliament, I am surprised that nobody has yet pointed out that tomorrow there is to be a Council of Ministers meeting. The Government want the Bill to be given a Second Reading tonight so as to strengthen Ministers' hands at that meeting. I do not accept that. Why is it that these far-reaching, deep-seated and drastic steps and changes to our way of life have to be accepted instantly and when the Government tell us it is good for us? We are told that, somehow, we shall miss a cruise on this great Eurotanker and that if we do not jump for it right now we shall miss the boat. The Government do not allow for the fact that it is not now and for ever. We may get another that we like better later on, or we may not even get on board this particular cruise at all.

In the last Parliament I spoke a number of times on fisheries matters, each time in a way that was critical of policy or, as the jargon of my Whip has it, in a way "unhelpful to the Government". I recognise that the Government have an impossible job in getting fisheries policy right. It cannot be done. Reading this Bill and the industry's reaction to it means that those who thought that the Government would conclude that less regulation might work where more has failed are going to be disappointed. Much stress has been placed on the message that the Bill is part of a package. It is free standing, but it must be seen in the context of a raft of measures designed, we are told, to conserve fish and to keep the industry viable. The raft gets heavier each year as new rules, regulations and restrictions are piled on it. Why is that? Because the common fisheries policy has failed and cannot deliver conservation or viability in anything but an ideal world.

The reality of the sea fish industry—whether it be catching, selling, coping with more regulation than the British nuclear industry or competing with the EC—is that the difficulties are hard enough, so why on earth pile on more regulations?

That leads to the question that we as a nation need to address. Do we want a British fishing industry? Pause while we all mentally answer yes, but I should like that reassurance from the Minister.

Only Ministers want the Bill. No Member with a fishing interest in his or her constituency has praised the Bill. None of our constituents seem to want it or think that it will work. I do not want to do Ministers, or their advisers, an injustice, but none of them—certainly neither the Minister nor I—has tried to earn a living on a boat for which we have mortgaged our houses and family lifestyles for 365 days a year, when we cannot work as many days as we need to, when we see other Europeans fishing the same waters laughing at us because they do not have the same restrictions and when we are bobbing about in the North sea risking life and limb puking over the side. How can I tell them that this medicine is what they must take when they tell me, because they know, that they do not want it? Do I know better than them? Does my hon. Friend the Minister and his advisers know better? I plead with my hon. Friend to address that point today.

All hon. Members regard parts of their constituencies as a touchstone, a yardstick. After the hothouse atmosphere of this place, anywhere in Waveney acts as such for me, but in particular the Lowestoft fishing market does. If an idea is sellable, it will sell there. If it is not, fishermen will not touch it. It was there that I recognised that the community charge must go. I went to the wall on that because I believed in it, against advice from outside, but despite what I thought personally I could not say that I knew best and that it must continue. The same applies to this Bill.

The big question that we must answer before 10 pm is how do we tell a struggling industry that we shall hold its head under water for a while and that if it drowns, never mind, the Dutch, French and Spanish will put fish on British tables?

The industry is fragmented and divided, not just country to country or port to port but section to section within a port. I understand the enthusiasm of my hon. Friend the Minister for a package that this year, like last year, appears in theory to be the great white hope. He must be exasperated by the industry and perhaps by me and other hon. Members who clamoured for a decommissioning scheme and who, when offered one, are still not happy. I wish that we were. The irony is that, three years ago, such a scheme might have done the job and might have reduced the fleet size and the effort. As other hon. Members have said, £25 million now does not touch it. It will make it possible for more efficient boats and more countries to catch more fish and to increase their effort.

[Mr. David Porter]

The decommissioning scheme is still not for the whole industry. It still will not reach all the fishermen who will be put out of work and it will still leave the British taxpayer paying more into our competitors' schemes than our fishermen could get out.

Although this part of the decommissioning package may not be a great hit, it may allow my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to tell the House in future that it has not worked and that he was against decommissioning all along, which, of course, he was. He will also say, as has been said, "The Bill is just an enabling measure", but once it is on the statute book it can and will be invoked.

The issue of consultation has been raised again and again tonight. Only today, I received a copy of a response to the consultation from the Lowestoft Fishing Vessel Owners Association, dated 4 June. That has not been digested. Was any consultation digested before the introduction of the Bill? The Minister cannot consult every fish merchant, lumper, seaman, skipper, boat owner or harbour master in the country on every issue, but he can open the quota-setting processes as widely as possible within the United Kingdom. Such people have the voices of experience. Why does not the Minister listen and consider those voices with the siren voices that sometimes come from Whitehall as he is navigating the policy ship?

The review of the CFP is an opportunity for Ministers properly to take stock. If they take the line that if we did not have a common fisheries policy we would have to invent it, fair enough, but let them look afresh at every idea, old and new. As the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) hinted, every part of the United Kingdom is different. What may be right for Scotland may not be right for East Anglia. Although proper compensation schemes for redundancy and scrapping will apply universally, they will have different implications and different impacts on local communities. Let the Minister remember that as he tinkers with the common fisheries policy.

What has upset the industry is the draconian nature of the Bill, and if the Minister reduces the fleet by bankruptcy he will go down in history as the most successful British fishing Minister.

The other part of the package is total allowable catches and quotas, the so-called bedrock of the CFP. We now hear that scientific evidence will not determine TACs in the future. As hon. Members will know, as well as representing fishermen and merchants I have the MAFF fisheries department at Lowestoft in my constituency. I know how important scientific evidence is and how much weight successive Ministers attach to it. Politicians and officials will take other factors into account. Hopefully, that will mean the survival of the British industry. The National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations has long argued for more emphasis on technical conservation measures, but it recognises, as we all must, the interconnection of species so that the development of multi-annual TACs will help longer-term planning, which the industry has not had for a long time. Without relative stability we might as well turn every port into a museum and go home tomorrow. I hope that the Government will stick by their resolve on that.

The NFFO and others support the continuing preference for fishermen within the 12-mile zone. My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned that in opening, and I congratulate him on doing so. I imagine that Ministers will have that in mind as they join in the mid-term review of the CFP in Europe. Determination to hold the line around the table with 11 other Governments is absolutely right, but to show that the Government are prepared to sacrifice even part of an industry is not the right way forward.

I finish, as I have in other fisheries debates, with some questions. I hope to hear some answers, if not now at least before the Committee finishes. In addition to my heart-felt plea for some real justification for the Bill that I can explain to my constituents who face the dole, is not the days-at-sea restriction totally alien to the British natural conservation policy? What is happening to other EC fleets? Do such restrictions apply to them? If so, why do we not have a list of them? Does my hon. Friend recognise the sense of injustice that prevails not only about the unfair enforcement policy but about our competitors having the edge over us all the time? What research has been conducted? Which ports and which boats will be affected? What is the impact on regional economies, particularly on East Anglia? What is the impact on the fishing effort, which, after all, is what we are supposed to be considering? I sit down in the hope that we can get some answers, but I bear in mind that we may not and that we must face the fact that part of the fishing industry is doomed.

8.47 pm

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): I congratulate hon. Members who have made maiden speeches.

I refer the House to clause 5, a simple clause which states:

"This Act extends to Northern Ireland."

As the fisheries spokesman for the fourth largest party in Parliament, I am glad to have caught your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In 1972, a Conservative Government abolished devolution in Northern Ireland and instigated, as a temporary measure, a system of direct rule whereby legislation for Northern Ireland would be introduced by Orders in Council. Right hon. and hon. Members from Northern Ireland would not have the right to amend Northern Ireland legislation. That temporary measure is becoming more like taxation, which was also introduced as a temporary measure.

The Bill is a simple example of how that offensive system of maladministration of Northern Ireland can be changed. One line in the Bill makes it clear that the Act extends to Northern Ireland and that, on this rare occasion, we are debating a United Kingdom measure. On behalf of my colleagues in Northern Ireland, I express our appreciation to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and other members of his ministerial team for introducing a United Kingdom Bill. It is significant that the new Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is among its supporters.

As I listened to the Minister's introductory speech, I was afraid that we were going through a nightmare and that we were again going to run into great bureaucratic problems in the fishing industry. The measure will curtail fishing, not long after the European Economic Community—as it was then called—was giving grants for more and more fishing boats. The same happened in the milk industry—the Community gave grants for more and

more cows and more and more dairies but, all of a sudden, quotas were introduced to reverse what the EEC had been doing, and we are now in the same situation in the fishing industry.

As other hon. Members have said, fishermen themselves accept the fact that there must be conservation of the fishing grounds. We in Northern Ireland appreciate the decision taken by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to ban the twin rate. It is especially welcomed by the nephrop fishermen in South Down, as the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) said, and in my constituency of Strangford. However, we cannot understand why there should be an exclusion clause for the Fladen Ground in the North sea. At some stage, I hope that the Minister will be able to explain more precisely why that particular ground was excluded.

The Minister said that the Bill will merely empower Ministers and that it is an enabling Bill. That is all right as far as it goes, but we must be told what role right hon. and hon. Members will have in discussing the details which follow the Bill. Unless we receive an assurance in that regard, I would hesitate to support the Bill.

The Minister said that we were in a period of consultation, and we must place on record our congratulations to him on the consultation paper that he sent to various organisations in the fishing industry. The very full consultative document contains 14 pages and should receive a positive response from all involved in the industry. However, I notice that on the back page, among the 26 organisations which were consulted in England, Scotland and Wales and even the Isle of Man, no reference is made to consultation with the industry in Northern Ireland. I do not know why consultation was omitted there when the Bill states that it applies to Northern Ireland.

I deal now with the licensing of vessels of under 10 ft. I accept the Minister's suggestion that it was a necessary measure. If we curtail vessels of more than 10 ft, it is clear that we shall undermine what is trying to be achieved if we give total freedom to those under 10 ft. [HON. MEMBERS: "Metres."] Vessels of under 10 metres—I was brought up with imperial measures. I heard someone referring to Mr. Deputy Speaker as Madam Deputy Speaker some time ago, so we all make mistakes.

Clause 3 increases fines to a maximum of £50,000. That is a very harsh fine, but it has not been mentioned so far. Will the Minister tell us what the present fine is? What is the increase if there is to be one?

We must also deal with effort control, the limiting of the days at sea, and the compulsory tie-up in port. Many hon. Members said that there would be arguments about the 1991 base. We have been told that a committee or panel will consider various applications. 1991 was a bad period for the fishing industry in Northern Ireland. Those interested in the fishing industry there will remember that for the first three months of 1991 there was a prolonged period of very bad weather when the fleet was tied in. That is why taking a particular year as a base is a very dangerous way to proceed when deciding how the limit on days should be applied.

The Minister was good enough to mention the problem of Sundays, and it is a major problem in Northern Ireland. The Sabbath is generally observed there and in the fishing village of Portavogie which has almost 100 boats of 10 metres, not one boat goes out on the Sabbath—they go out one minute after midnight. That applies not only in Portavogie but elsewhere in Northern Ireland and, I suspect, in Scotland—perhaps there is also some religion left in England where it might apply.

When considering which days to curtail the fleet, may I ask the Minister to ensure that if it is to be one day in the week, it should be Sunday. If it is not Sunday, it will discriminate against all the fishermen in my constituency. If it is to be two days in the week, one of the days should also be Sunday. I am inclined to agree with the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) that there should be a curtailment of weekend fishing which would satisfy us in Northern Ireland and the people in the western part of Scotland.

The restrictions on the British fishing fleet are a worry if they are not to apply to foreign fishing boats in our own waters. Some examples have already been mentioned but, as the hon. Member for South Down said, our main concern in Northern Ireland would be the southern Irish boats. Unless the same measures apply to them in our area, there would be a great problem because the Northern Ireland fishing fleet would be tied up but southern Irish boats could come into our waters. Clearly, that would create a problem in Ireland, where we perhaps have enough problems already without creating another.

We experienced another example of the complication caused by different legislation in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland only a few week ago when a boat from my constituency was seized by the southern Irish fishing authorities outside Kingstown because it had no ladder to enable the fisheries inspector to board the boat to inspect it. That is not a requirement in the United Kingdom, but it is the law of the Republic of Ireland. When British boats, whether from Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, go into southern Irish waters, they will be brought before the courts as that skipper was and charged with not having a ladder. That shows that having different fishing laws for each nation causes great confusion and that it is better to have a common fisheries policy in such instances. That is why I follow the line of the hon. Member for St. Ives. (Mr. Harris) that we should have restrictions common to the whole Community, not ones which apply only to British boats and not to foreign boats in British waters.

I want further explanation from the Minister as to why we shall not get compensation for the days on which boats are tied up. Perhaps the Minister does not have the money. If that is the reason, he should say so. If there are other reasons, he should explain them more fully.

The fishing industry says that not enough finance is being made available to make the decommissioning scheme effective. There has not been a proper response to that allegation by the fishing lobby. I should like the Minister to tell us what impact he thinks that his present decommissioning proposals will have on the future size of the British fishing fleet. Let us hear him spell out the results that he expects from the present decommissioning proposals.

I ask the Minister to reconsider the date of implementation of the decommissioning scheme. The Minister says that it will apply to ownership of boats prior to 1 January 1992. Boats have changed hands since 1 January 1992, and as his statement announcing the new policy was made on 27 February 1992 the scheme should extend to cover ownership of boats up to the date of the statement.

[Mr. John D. Taylor]

Clearly, there are many criticisms of the Bill. I shall vote against the Scottish National party's reasoned amendment, but the general thrust of the Bill raises many problems which require more effective replies. In Committee, the Ulster Unionist party will oppose some of the clauses.

9 pm

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): I will try to be brief because I know that many other hon. Members want to speak. My constituency fishing interests are mainly the smaller vessels—the 50-footers. My predecessor, the late Alick Buchanan-Smith, was a great champion of the fishing industry. Having visited the ports in the constituency, I can understand why.

The fishing port of Gourdon is a relevant example. Some 10 years ago, there were 18 50-footers in the port; now there are only three, which support six fish-processing companies and fish merchants. That port and its fishermen depend greatly on conservation and they believe vehemently in conservation.

The fishing boats, which go out only for two days rather than for longer periods as the larger fishing boats do, provide a steady stream of fresh fish to the fish processors and consumers in the area. It is vital that the fishing port should survive, and it can do so only through conservation. At present, the fishing boats struggle to catch their quota not because of restricted days, but because of the lack of fish.

It is interesting that no one claims credit for supporting the Bill. I believe that the Bill must go through. It is an enabling measure and a first step to ensuring that we get decommissioning, which all of us in Scotland have sought for so long.

I know that many people complain that the amount of decommissioning is insufficient, but surely if we apply decommissioning at the suggested level and couple it with the restricted days we can ensure that the boats that remain in the fleet do not make up for those which are taken out of it.

It is vital that the details behind the licensed days are worked out carefully. I was pleased to hear the Minister stress flexibility because flexibility is desperately needed, not just on licensed days, but in the definition of days at sea. There have been references to maintenance. In the port of Stonehaven, there is a fisherman who used to give the use of his boat to the local education authority to take school children on educational trips round oil rigs. That counts as a day at sea fishing; such days must be taken out of the definition of a day of fishing and, therefore, not counted.

It is important for everyone that conservation is made to work. It is important that the Bill is passed so that we can get decommissioning and conservation. We can then get a controlled and balanced supply of fish. We must ensure that the Minister looks after the small ports and the smaller boats, and that the licensed days are not applied in such a way that we end up with just the larger boats at the expense of the smaller ports. Whole communities are at stake in the smaller ports, which have a long history and tradition. Whatever assistance is given to those ports in the event of closure, it will not replace an industry which provides an exceedingly valuable service to the nation.

9.4 pm

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): Last July, the Milford Haven middle-distance fleet effectively collapsed. Having pleaded with the Government for almost two years to introduce a decommissioning scheme under which they could rationalise, restructure and reduce the size of the fleet, the fishermen found market forces taking over, and seven trawlers owned by three separate companies had to cease operations.

The effect on the port of Milford Haven was significant. Scores of people who worked both ashore and afloat were made redundant. The people of Milford Haven were staggered by the Government's announcement in February that they had performed a U-turn and were to introduce a decommissioning scheme after all. I hope that the Minister will explain in detail to the people of Milford Haven, who are unemployed as a result of the Government's refusal in 1990 and 1991 to introduce a decommissioning scheme, why they have decided to do so now.

The bitterness felt by the people of Milford Haven is added to by the fact that the pressure stock licences attached to those vessels were recently bought by Irish interests. The vessels were sold back to the receiver for a nominal sum and the licences were re-sold to beam trawlers in the North sea. That means that we not only have no fleet, but we have no locally controlled pressure stock licences with which to regenerate our fishing industry in Pembrokeshire. I hope that the Minister will explain why this significant change of view, welcome though it is, has taken place so late.

Many hon. Members have referred to flags of convenience—ships supposedly owned by British companies but in fact exclusively controlled by Spanish interests. Milford Haven has certainly been experiencing Spanish influence in the past year or two. It may interest hon. Members to know that Spanish interests plan to establish a producer organisation known as the Wales and south-west fish producers organisation, which will effectively be controlled from Corunna, Gijon and elsewhere. The organisation will have 42 vessels, and the idea is basically to secure and control the British quota available in the Irish sea. I hope that the Minister will address himself to the question of how those 42 vessels' operations can effectively be policed. Under the current legislation, they need only call at a British port four times every six months. How will the Minister administer the rules governing the number of days on which they put to sea and fish if they are operating from Spanish ports?

If we are to have conservation, it is vital that there should be a level playing field. It is ludicrous that British seamen should go out and risk their lives playing to a strict set of rules with increased policing—the 60 or 64 man-years in the consultative document and the Bill—while Spanish, French, Belgian and Dutch fleets, and even flag-of-convenience vessels from Panama, fish in our waters but fail to operate under those rules. That is totally unfair and I do not see how the Minister can justify his argument for a unilateral position and rules which the EC as a whole will not enforce.

Before the war, and for the first two decades thereafter, the Milford Haven fishing industry was renowned. We need regulations that people can understand and stability to regenerate our fishing industry. Frankly, the Bill goes nowhere near to achieving that.

9.9 pm

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): The Castle Point fishermen are an independent and resourceful people. We have a fleet of about 18 boats. With respect, our fishermen understand as well as anyone in this place that, unless fish stocks are properly conserved, there will be no fish left for them or their children to harvest. I therefore congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister of State on his driving vision to protect the fisheries, but not on the consultation process, which has been too short. My hon. Friend the Minister of State cannot take unlimited powers to stop my constituents from working.

We have about nine boats in the 7-to-10 m range and nine boats in the 10-to-12 m range. Let me give a typical example of a Canvey Island fisherman called Mr. Davis. He is a British registered sole fisherman and an independent owner-skipper with a small boat working in the Thames estuary. He is now allowed to catch only 0·25 tonnes of sole a month. A year ago he had no quota and he caught on average about 0·5 tonnes a month.

Mr. Davis is not a member of a producer organisation and nor does he want to be a member of one even if that is inconvenient for the Ministry. I applaud his independent, self-reliant stand. Why should he be forced to join the club? That would be a restrictive trade practice and, as a Conservative, I have been fighting such practices for many years.

Whenever a boat stops fishing and is decommissioned, the producer organisation can buy that boat's days at sea and quota. That could lead to five factory boats owning 75 per cent. of the United Kingdom sole quota. That would be anti-competitive and it would damage the interests of my independent fishermen.

Mr. Davis fishes for sole and a few eels in summer and for cod when they come up the Thames to spawn in autumn. He fishes for sprats at Christmas. He is basically laid up in February, March and April.

That background is important to understanding the safety point that I raise on behalf of the Holehaven Fishermen's Association. Let me explain why the days-at-sea fishing restrictions would dramatically denigrate their safety, especially on top of the current weight quota. The weather of course is already a severe restriction, particularly for smaller boats such as those of the Castle Point fleet. There is almost a total lack of local harbour facilities, and there are the most severe tidal restrictions around Benfleet creek. In addition, as I explained earlier, the fish are available only on a short seasonal basis and there are no fish at all in some months.

Clearly, there would be pressure on the owner-skippers to go to sea in worse weather conditions than they would attempt without the day restrictions and for them to stay at sea for the full 24-hour allowance on the allotted day. There may be pressure on them to load their boats a little more, and to stay at sea longer and in worse weather than they might choose now.

Our small boats have just one man aboard. What happens if he feels tired? His house is on the line, he has mouths to feed and a mortgage to pay, but his catch is still too small. He may not be allowed to go out again for some days because of the allocation, but by that time the season may have ended and the fish will have gone with it. His living will then also have gone. That is indeed stress.

Our Castle Point small boats are threatened by the Minister's day allocation proposal. That cannot be right or fair. The increased danger would be intolerable. Castle Point fishermen already risk their lives to feed this nation in one of the most dangerous occupations in this country. I am sure that the Minister will want to find ways to alleviate the problems and to compensate small boat owners properly and perhaps even those below the 10 m threshold.

I should be delighted if the Minister would visit Castle Point and would meet some of our professional independent owner-skippers. They would be the first to applaud his aims to conserve fish and to welcome his appeals system. However, they seek fair play, continued fishing, and proper compensation if they cannot fish. After all, as hon. Members know, it was not my small fleet that stripped the seas of fish; it was the factory ships. Yet the Minister's plans would attack my small independent fleet the most.

9.14 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): The debate has shown that there is deep concern about the Bill. Certainly there has been deep concern about the lack of consultation before the Bill was produced, and about the amount of money allocated for decommissioning purposes. The feeling in the industry is that, as a result, many small fishing companies will go to the wall because they are operating on limited profit margins. The limited time at sea could also have serious implications for safety, especially on small vessels. I should like the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland to explain how, with limited time at sea, one will be able to do quota management. Clearly that will create problems. Also, how will quota management work in practice?

I represent the port of Hull, which, until about 12 years ago, was the biggest fishing port not only in Britain but in Europe, with a massive distant water fleet. Of course, with the introduction of the Icelandic 200-mile fishing limit and the common fisheries policy in 1983, the fleet side of the industry collapsed with the loss of about 8,000 jobs. Although there were some decommissioning grants, the men received absolutley nothing. With this enabling Bill, which will create many administrative powers, will there be compensation for the men as well as the owners? That did not happen with the collapse of the distant water fleets in Hull, Grimsby and Fleetwood. The men got nothing at all.

We have employment legislation which enables the Government to provide compensation and redundancy payments, but, over the years, the Government have refused to provide compensation or redundancy payments to fishermen because they regard them as casual workers. That must be absurd. People have worked for the same company for 35 years, but the Government regard them as casual. They have contributed to the same pension schemes, but the Government regard them as casual. One of my constituents was presented with a gold watch for being with the same company for 25 years, yet he is regarded as casual.

The Government have introduced time bars. The Department of Employment misled men and told them, "Do not apply for redundancy; you do not qualify because you are casual." We have established that that was wrong and the Government have accepted it. Men have been paying for their national insurance stamps. They also have a system of signing on and off, which again has created great difficulties for them. We have massive injustice.

[Mr. Stuart Randall]

People want their cases to be heard, and have been trying to get them heard since 1983, but the Government are putting hurdles in their way. Let us have those cases heard.

It is a serious matter. These men are not greedy; they are fighting on a point of principle. They have worked in a most hazardous industry around the banks, Iceland and Norway, in temperatures of minus 30 deg for about 350 days a year, and have made great contributions not only to the food supply but to military intelligence during wars. They are forgotten heroes. The Government have been saying that the only way to deal with those cases is by a series of tribunals. There have been tribunals, but the Government still have not drawn up any guidelines to assess all outstanding cases. We are getting delay, delay and more delay. The system of dispensing justice to the distant water fishermen is failing. The Government are not being fair to these people.

I have no time properly to make my case, but I ask the Under-Secretary to talk to his colleague in the Department of Employment, which is the lead Department in the matter, to see whether there is some way in which under the legislation, which will create several administrative procedures, a linkage can be found to ensure that the fishermen's cases are properly considered. It is wrong that they should be treated in this dreadful way. It would not set any precedents to compensate them. It would not be costly. We are talking about a small number of people.

It is time for action from the Government. I ask the Under-Secretary to have discussions with his counterpart in the Department of Employment on whether some arrangement can be drawn up.

9.20 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): We have had a long debate by fishing standards and a full and representative one. One of the pleasures of this season of Parliament is that we have a fair old geographical tour of Britain in the form of maiden speeches. Tonight has been no exception. I pay tribute to the hon. Members for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait), for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) and for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes), who made their maiden speeches this evening.

I checked the background of the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye, who has a Scottish pedigree in her political experience. I noticed from one of the profiles in the Library that normally, according to the *Sunday Express*, she

"fairly bubbles with enthusiasm for Tory achievements".

I thought that it was perhaps a comment on the legislation before us that we did not see that to the full extent today. However, we heard an enjoyable and informative speech. In fairness to the hon. Lady, I should say that the whole House already owes her a considerable debt. I read from the same profile that she

"was selected for Hastings and Rye, defeating Peter Bruinvels April '91."

The hon. Member for Ayr is from my neck of the woods. I know him from when he was active in my constituency. He paid a generous tribute to his predecessor, George Younger. I am not sure whether George Younger is in a state of metamorphosis or whether he has already become Lord Younger. We enjoyed the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Ayr. I am sure that he will make a strong contribution not only to Scottish debates but on the wider issues in which he is involved.

The hon. Member for Scarborough gave an extremely entertaining account of his constituency. I am almost tempted to go there, but also to come back. I became slightly worried when he had been going for 10 minutes and had reached only 1267 but the pace of events accelerated after that. I am sure that many hon. Members who participate in fishing debates will remember with affection his predecessor, Sir Michael Shaw, who made succinct contributions to fishing debates but always spoke well on behalf of his fishing interests.

I remember Sir Michael Shaw particularly because the first major parliamentary activity in which I was involved after being elected in 1987 was the English poll tax legislation. Sir Michael Shaw presided over the Standing Committee. It was a good parliamentary Committee in which to cut one's teeth and he presided over it in a fair and good-humoured way. I am sure that everyone here sends him, Lord Younger and Kenneth Warren best wishes for their respective retirements.

I have been surprised at the strength of opposition to the Bill from all quarters of the House today. As I said, we had a representative mixture of speeches. Every part of England has been represented. We heard the authentic voice of South Down and we heard from Scottish interests. Frankly, no one has said——

Mr. Morley: And Wales.

Mr. Wilson: I am sorry. We have also heard speeches from Welsh Opposition Members. However, we have not heard from anyone who was terrifically keen on the legislation. Perhaps that should not have been such a surprise——

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): The Under-Secretary of State is keen.

Mr. Wilson: Yes, I am told that he is terrifically keen, but that has yet to manifest itself. We wait with interest.

Perhaps we should not have been surprised because the editorial in *Fishing News* on 29 May summed up the feeling of the fishing industry around our coast, saying:

"Not only is the principle of imposing limits on the days a boat can spend at sea without compensation highly questionable, but so too is the practice. Once these powers are in place"—

referring to the Bill—

"the government will have a management tool which it will be able to enforce at will . . . Fishermen's abilities to make their boats pay are already severely compromised by the quota system. Many, rather than go out of business, bend the rules."

A somewhat rare admission in that industry.

"Now on top of a quota system which is openly admitted to be a conservation and management failure, fishermen are to have a new constraint which will be 'unbendable'—on top of all the other technical and licensing restrictions."

Those are strong words indeed from *Fishing News*.

Mr. Curry: Perhaps I may quote a different part of the same editorial:

"There are fishermen who are sympathetic to days at sea limitations provided they are applied in a way which is acceptable. They would help to share out the action between more boats, and would be effective as a conservation tool; perhaps the only truly effective one."

Mr. Wilson: I always work on the assumption that no one reads the same editorials that I do, but I am grateful to the Minister for putting a balanced view.

There was genuine surprise in the Chamber as we realised that not only is there to be a limit on days at sea, and all that that principle entails, but it is apparently to be applied on a boat-by-boat basis. From having a word with the Minister outside the Chamber, I know that the system seems to be a hybrid. I do not mean to misrepresent it, but some categories of boat will be taken together and some will be taken separately.

The concerns that have been expressed from all quarters about the sheer bureaucratic entanglements that the Bill will lead to, and the idea of each boat being subject to a separate regime with separate appeals, are fairly frightening.

The explanatory and financial memorandum, in the "Effect of the Bill on Public Sector Manpower", states:

"Restricting days at sea for some 3,800 vessels over 10 metres in length will require a significant increase in enforcement posts."

They can say that again.

I was in the Committee of a major Scottish Bill, the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill, today. To their great credit, the Conservatives are nationalising the bankruptcy process in Scotland and creating 400 extra civil service jobs. That is very commendable. The Government seem determined to increase the public sector. I am tempted to combine the two measures. As we understand it, the sheer difficulties of enforcement involved in the Bill are worrying and they will have to be debated and explained further.

No one likes the idea of attaching a days-at-sea stipulation to a decommissioning scheme and making it a trade-off of one against the other, but if it is to exist and to command respect there must be minimum criteria of comprehensibility, non-bureaucracy, so far as that is possible, and even-handedness. From what we have heard today, it is far from clear whether any of those criteria will apply.

I am strongly attracted to the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), who called into question the effectiveness of the quota and tie-up regime. None of the artificial measures, which seem constantly to be piled one upon another, come up with a solution, the problem being that there is too much catching power in the industry. We shall not have time tonight, but we ought to examine the issue in a more fundamental way.

Ms. Mowlam: My hon. Friend will realise that the enforcement of the days-at-sea rule is of particular concern to ports such as that in my constituency—*[Interruption.]* The Minister of State may giggle, but the boats in Redcar are as important as those in bigger ports—and people depend on them for work. There is concern about how the appeal procedure will work in the case of just a few boats affected by particular weather and beach-launching conditions. Will my hon. Friend urge the Minister to examine that aspect?

Mr. Wilson: I strongly agree with my hon. Friend's point, which is germane to my next argument. My slight knowledge of the industry centres far more on the smaller and weaker ports than on the great capital-intensive centres. That is the reason for my concern about the proposal that producers' organisations should engage in the purchase of TAC records. That is disturbingly similar to the proposals for individual transferable quotas, which the industry largely opposes—as did the Government, previously.

Quotas will be sold only within the producer organisations and can then be added to the existing quotas of other vessels. If they are lost to a port because fishermen are looking for a financial escape hatch out of the industry, that will be to the disadvantage of smaller fishing communities. Fishing effort would not, however, be reduced—because such quotas would be transferred to larger and stronger ports. Many owners are only too willing to enhance their quotas by purchasing additions through their producer organisation.

That happened before, when pressure stock licences from the weaker ports ended up in the larger ports. Some fishing communities may have 20 or 30 vessels working out of them. If, by some device, two or three of those rights to fish are lost, that means a loss of 10 per cent. of that local industry and its jobs, and of the viability of the on-shore jobs which depend on them. I deplore any system based on financial incentives to transfer parts of the existing industry from small fishing communities to the largest and most powerful communities.

The one-net rule is another adjunct of the Bill. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) referred to the need to have a Queen's counsel on board to enable fishermen to keep abreast of the remarkably complex laws that they must observe. Perhaps that is a job for the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who could don his wellies on his day off and charge his usual fees.

One must consider also the effect of the one-net rule on by-catches, and the breakdown into target species, quota species, and non-quota species. There will be a percentage of each fixed, and a vessel would not be permitted to catch too much of one species or too little of another. It might help to have a mathematician on board as well as a QC.

It is impossible for any industry to operate under such detailed conditions. When the Scottish Fishermen's Federation responded to the one-net proposal, it made it clear to the Government that the only basis on which its membership would comtemplate acceptance was as the forerunner to the introduction of a Community-wide one-net rule promoted by the British Government. What are the Government doing in that regard?

The federation also argued that the by-catch rules governing the use of a 70 mm net in prawn fisheries, which currently allow 60 per cent. of the total catch to be taken as protected species, should be relaxed, so that haddock and whiting would be counted against that limit, and all other protected species excluded.

In that context, we have heard of the problems of the Western Isles fishermen, which also apply to other similar fishing communities. Those fishermen are in a special position. In order to carry on their traditional livelihood, their boats have worked for prawns and white fish. For 30 years, prawns have been the mainstay of the Scottish west coast fisheries, but the white fish fishery has also been important. The fishermen go to sea in boats carrying nets for both types of fishing and they prosecute both fisheries. They cannot return to port and exchange those nets at the drop of a hat as the Bill would compel them to do. They operate a conservation-conscious fishery, so why, in heaven's name, is the might of the Government and the European Commission directed against that type of operation? That is beyond my wit, and I have enough

[Mr. Wilson]

respect for the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland to believe that it is beyond his comprehension as well.

I noticed that when my hon. Friend the Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) was speaking the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was in his place and I think that he was taking some notes on possible derogations. A sledgehammer must not be used to crack a nut in order to enforce the generality of the Bill. It is ridiculous that people who are doing no harm whatever in conservation terms should also be caught up by the Bill.

In his opening remarks, the Minister referred to the Bill as being a form of subsidiarity. I believe in real subsidiarity. As I understand it, the point of it is to take decision-making down to the lowest convenient level. That is a great idea. Why do the Government not go for regional management of fishing stocks? As we have heard from Conservative Members, we have many different fisheries round the coasts of Britain. There is no such thing as a British or Scottish fishing industry—these are generic terms. Different areas have different interests and different types of fishery. There is a need for fisheries to be managed at a local level and for sensible exemptions and sensible measures to be introduced, including, for example the sensible protection of the fisheries in the south-west against incursions from outside fleets. Let us have a system of regional fishery management because we would then have a more sensitive and intelligent approach to the management of fisheries.

I want to raise two specific points. The first has already been raised, but I must press the Minister for a more straightforward account of what transpired at Stornoway sheriff court last week. If no appeal is intended, the matter cannot be sub judice. Will the Minister recognise that it is a matter of widespread interest? Will he put aside the slight coyness that he revealed earlier and tell us in non-recriminatory and simple terms whether something went wrong and what the implications will be? It has been pointed out that there was a similar judgment to last week's in 1983, so it is reasonable to ask whether anything has been done since 1983 or whether the 1983 judgment was also wrong and irrelevant. I hope that the Minister will help the House, and particularly my hon. Friend the Member for the Western Isles, on that.

The second point refers to the well-known fact that the Panamanian registered and unlicensed Spanish-crewed vessel which was caught off Rockall with 60 tonnes of monkfish on board was carrying monofilament nets. Obviously, that vessel found a profitable fishery and thought it worth while to be there along with several other Panamanian registered, Spanish-owned vessels. The absurdity is that if a small fishing boat sets out from a Scottish port—or, I assume, a port in England—with a monofilament net on board, the carriage of such a net would in itself be an offence. Everyone on the west coast recognises that there is a promising fishery for monkfish, but it cannot be prosecuted by our own fishermen. The matter is taken to the point of absurdity because, while those vast vessels are fishing for monkfish off Rockall with monofilament nets and are apparently within the law, a fisherman in the port of Mallaig, Nigel Johnston, is being deprived of a livelihood because he was carrying relatively small monofilament nets to prosecute the cray fishery, which is a much smaller but also perfectly reasonable way for people to earn a living. He is caught up in that mass of red tape.

Will the Minister clarify the Panamanian-Spanish case last week and, given the absurdity that I have highlighted, look again at the question of monofilament nets? It is nonsense and is caught up in the Scottish Office's paranoia that anyone carrying monofilament nets must be fishing for salmon.

Both sides of the House have expressed a high degree of dissatisfaction with the Bill. We do not believe that tabling milk-and-water amendments is the way to deal with it. We shall vote against it tonight, and we invite other parties and all dissenters in the Conservative party to vote with us.

9.41 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): I am disappointed that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) intends, in effect, to vote against conservation. That is a sad thing to do tonight.

May I join many other hon. Members on both sides of the House in warmly congratulating the three maiden speakers: my hon. Friends the Members for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait), for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes), and for Ayr (Mr. Gallie). My hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye seems to have most of the important battlefields of England in her constituency and I hope that she does not intend to translate that into the world of fishing. It was delightful to hear what she had to say about her lovely constituency. My hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough made as racey a speech as we would have expected from his predecessor. We are glad to have him participating in debates on fishing. My hon. Friend the Member for Ayr had one of the most remarkable victories of the general election. I warmly support his great efforts in retaining the seat that was so ably represented by George Younger for many years. I cross friendly swords with him over his monopoly of Robert Burns, because my constituency of Dumfries looks after at least the better half. It was good to have him joining in a fishing debate so early in his parliamentary life, particularly because he was constructive over the prawn fishing issue, which is the first of the many points to which I wish to respond.

Prawn fishing is important because prawn conservation, or nephrops conservation, is as important as the conservation of white fish. That is why I have asked the Sea Fish Industry Authority to convene another nephrops forum to decide the right way forward. As hon. Members know, we considered banning nephrops fishing at weekends, but that might have had a catastrophic impact on the processing industry, and I wanted to be clear that we were going in the right direction before imposing such a ban.

Mr. Salmond: I note the enthusiasm with which the Minister greets this first intervention.

The House will probably agree that such a nephrops forum is a good idea and I am sure that the Minister is about to tell us that, pending the decision of such a forum, there will at least be a suspension of unilateral action on the one-net rule. Surely the Minister would not act before listening to the interesting and informative discussion at that forum.

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman anticipates much good stuff to follow. I will wait until the one-net rule is in place before saying what is happening.

I was talking about the prawn issue, which was raised by the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald). I wish to reply to the points raised both by him and by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North about the recent court case—a subject on which I intervened briefly earlier. I wish to make it absolutely clear that there is no loophole in the legislation. The case failed on technical grounds which is why we are not appealing against the judgment. We are perfectly confident that, were there to be a further breach by a Panamanian or other foreign vessel, we would have sufficient powers to take action. I hope that if we have to do so and there is sufficient evidence, we shall win the court case.

Mr. Macdonald: I am not entirely clear on what the Minister said about the case having failed on technicalities. If the same technical reasons caused the case to fail in 1983, why was that not made clear so that another case of the same sort was not instigated?

Sir Hector Monro: One has to accept that there was a lack of continuity of information. I am sorry that the case proceeded as it did, and I am now stating clearly that in future we shall have the necessary powers. Fishermen in Western Isles and elsewhere can be confident that we will be successful in any future prosecutions.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Will the Minister give way?

Sir Hector Monro: I have only 14 minutes left and I have made it absolutely clear, even to a Queen's counsel, what the position is——

Mr. Campbell: Even on a legal point?

Sir Hector Monro: That is the worst sort.

I was flattered to hear so many quotes from my previous speeches. An important theme in the speeches of those disinclined to support conservation measures was to ask why the United Kingdom should be hit when the rest of the Community was not. We must accept that we have by far the largest share of fishing effort in the Community, so we must be in the forefront of conservation. Our partners are active; many of them are carrying out the same measures as we are and some are a great deal nearer their multi-annual guidance programme targets than we are. I know that that subject will be discussed in Luxembourg tomorrow.

The Community has given all its members clear advice that they must have tough conservation measures in the coming three or four years and monitor how they develop. We must have a combination of measures, and we are pressing all our partners to be as strict as we are—Commissioner Marin is currently being forceful on that issue. It is right that we should take those measures seriously, and employ observers. That is why so many aircraft and ships are carrying out surveillance. That is the only way that we can fully implement the policies that we have outlined.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) knows, the aircraft of both the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland are run by commercial companies. However, we are considering all alternative methods of running our ships and no decision has been taken—I can give that firm commitment.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) was very concerned about discrimination against United Kingdom fishermen. Effort reduction will be a major contribution to meeting the MAGP target, which we must negotiate with the Commission later this year. All other member states will also have to meet their targets by taking action, but they may opt for different measures.

Mr. Morley: Was not the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) making a point made by many other hon. Members who have spoken today? Many ports, such as Whitehaven and Maryport, have fleets that are being tied up in port. They are already stretched to the limit, because other member states have met their targets by means of proper decommissioning and, although we have the same opportunity, the Government refuse to take advantage of the 70 per cent. finance offered by the EC.

Sir Hector Monro: The hon.Gentleman's figures are wrong. Comparatively few fleets are tied up at any one time. The 135-day limit, which was set only after the most careful consultations with our scientists, is for conservation reasons.

I wish that all hon. Members would accept that the Government do not want the regulations and bureaucracy that some have described. I know that my right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Scotland, and my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, would confirm that our wish and duty is to help the fishing industry in every possible way. We want the industry to be profitable, so that the housewife can benefit from the best possible service. We certainly do not want to persecute the fishing industry, as some hon. Members seem to believe.

Mr. Moate: It is reassuring to hear my hon. Friend repeat that the Government have no wish to pursue unnecessary regulation. Does he accept, however, that a slight contradiction is involved? The Bill gives the Government power to impose the days-at-sea regulations on the under-10 m fleet, but my hon. Friend the Minister of State said earlier that they did not intend to do so. Meanwhile, Ministry officials are giving the impression that it is inevitable for such controls to apply to the under-10 m fleet. Will my hon. Friend at least give us an assurance that he will be open-minded in Committee about amendments clarifying the matter? I gladly volunteer to serve on the Standing Committee.

Sir Hector Monro: That is duty.

I agree that we must be clear about the under-10 m fleet. Some hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink), seem to have been misinformed. There is no restriction on those ships; the only difference between them and the rest of the fleet is the fact that they are not eligible for decommissioning. They can go to sea when they like, regardless of the weather.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House expressed great concern about bad weather and the 135-day restriction. When we deal with that, and with licensing, we shall consider carefully track records and days at sea, including the days that ships have spent steaming from market ports to home ports in 1991. If they have been

[Sir Hector Monro]

caught out a number of times, or have been carrying out repairs, that will be taken into account. We are being as flexible as we can be.

The hon. Members for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) raised the issue of the one-net rule. That demonstrates the advantages of consultation. We shall consider carefully all the issues that have been raised by those fishermen who will be affected by the one-net rule and see what steps can be taken to remove their concern. At the beginning of the debate my hon. Friend the Minister said that we shall have to bear in mind that that is a European Community regulation.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North asked when we were going to deal with the issue. The answer is, tomorrow. We shall consider many of these issues tomorrow in Luxembourg.

Mr. Salmond *rose——*

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland asked me about the Shetland box. Bearing in mind the difficulties that we previously encountered over obtaining the Shetland box, we are anxious to retain the present position. We do not intend to allow any change to the box to be made during our European Community consultations.

Mr. Salmond: The Minister has apparently made a concession on the one-net rule, but will he confirm that while a change in the by-catch arrangement is a matter for the Community, the unilateral imposition of the one-net rule, which has already happened, is purely a matter for him? The Minister ought to announce a delay in the imposition of the one-net rule this evening.

Sir Hector Monro: I have not made any concession. What I said was that I am considering the matter, bearing in mind the very great discussions that we have had during the last week or two with the fishermen and the fact that we shall be in Luxembourg tomorrow when there will be an opportunity to discuss the matter further.

I want to make it quite clear to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland that we feel that the Shetland issue is very important and that it is important to meet the Shetlanders to discuss their fishing industry with them.

The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) asked about the increase in maximum fines in clause 3. The increase is from £5,000 to £50,000. Perhaps that is small beer to him, but it is very important to us.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) asked a number of questions, in particular why we are not introducing more technical measures. We have already made it clear that nearly all the measures that will be taken as a result of the Bill, as well as all the announcements that we have made this year, are technical measures. That is why it is difficult to understand what the hon. Gentleman has in mind. We have gone beyond the Community package, as announced on 12 May, by introducing additional measures on a national basis. They are all intended to help to conserve fish stocks. Until stocks of white fish increase, we need to continue with what seems to be a very tough line. However, it is in the interests of fishermen. These measures will help them in the long run.

There is an urgent need to tackle the pressing problems that threaten the fishing industry. To reduce fishing effort is crucial to the long-term interests of our fishermen, as well as to fish stocks. Decisive and early action is required. That is what we are delivering. Our package is a careful combination of payments to the industry and encouragement to voluntary action and regulation. The Government are making a very substantial and clear commitment. That is highlighted by the decommissioning scheme, about which I have not had sufficient time to talk this evening. *[Interruption.]* It is a very important issue. The fact that the sum of £25 million is derided by the Opposition shows that they do not live in the real world when it comes to finance. The industry is being asked to play its part. Together with the implementation of this package, I believe that we have the means to secure real conservation benefits in the long-term interests of the United Kingdom fishing industry. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 22, Noes 218.

Division No. 22] **[9.50 pm**

AYES

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Beith, A. J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Cryer, Bob
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Harvey, Nick
Home Robertson, John
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Lynne, Ms Liz
McGrady, Eddie
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. Dafydd Wigley.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beresford, Sir Paul
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Niranjan
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*

Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Philip
Gardiner, Sir George
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and Mr. Nicholas Baker.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on second or third reading:—

The House divided: Ayes 216, Noes 187.

Division No. 23] **[10.12 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine

Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. David Davies.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nicholas
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, James
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Coffey, Ms Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'f'nd)*
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, William
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Heppell, John
Hicks, Robert
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoff
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Khabra, Piara
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCartney, Ian
MacDonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Salmond, Alex
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Motion made, and Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills), That the Bill be committed to a Special Standing Committee.—*[Mr. Wallace.]*

The House divided: Ayes 130, Noes 208.

Division Number 24] **[10.255 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nicholas
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, James
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Coffey, Ms Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob

Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gunnell, John
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hepple, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Khabra, Piara
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCartney, Ian
MacDonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Mudie, George
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Randall, Stuart
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. James Wallace.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Philip
Gardiner, Sir George
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Kilfedder, James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

Question accordingly negatived.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

SEA FISH (CONSERVATION) BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to the Act in the expenses incurred by any Minister of the Crown under any other enactment.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

Statutory Instruments, &c

10.35 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Motions on two statutory instruments—items No. 3 and 4 on the Order Paper—are to be taken forthwith. I draw your attention to item No. 4 in respect of which it is said:

"The Instrument has not yet been considered by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments."

The Committee was not formed, by resolution of the House, until last Friday. As the Committee meets tomorrow for the first time this Session, it is wrong that an order should be passed by the House without the necessary consideration. There can be no justification for the Government moving the order tonight because it does not come into force until 1 July—I have a copy here.

Therefore, the Government should not move item No. 4 so that the Committee may have time to consider the order and to draw to the attention of the House, under the terms of the Standing Order, any defects in the instrument. If the order is moved tonight, the Government will be deliberately flouting the wishes of the House by appointing people to a Committee but preventing them from carrying out the job that the House has given to them. I hope that the Government will not move item No. 4.

Madam Speaker: What the hon. Gentleman says is correct, but the instruments are in good order. The Government are prepared to move them, and so I have to put the Question on them.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the draft Anatomy (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 2nd March, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—*[Mr. Mackay.]*

BUILDING SOCIETIES

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Building Societies (Member States) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 15th May, be approved.—*[Mr. Mackay.]*

PETITION

Aung San Suu Kyi

10.36 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): I wish to present a petition, signed by 600 people, calling for the release from house arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been held in virtual isolation for the past three years at her home in Rangoon. The petition reads:

That human rights continue to be violated in Burma (Union of Myanmar) as evidenced by the house arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi and the detention of other prisoners of conscience.

Wherefore your humble petitioners pray that your honourable House urge the Government to continue the international pressure to secure the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other Burmese prisoners of conscience.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Trafford Park

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Robert G. Hughes.*]

10.38 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): The bulk of the Trafford park estate is in my constituency, and for those of us who grew up in Manchester, it was once a symbol of the north-west's manufacturing strength. My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) spent much of his working life with the company formerly known as Metrovic, later GEC—and that industrial upbringing was a valuable part of the area's economic and cultural strength. Many of those who have passed through the doors of the House served part of their industrial and political time in Trafford park.

It is a considerable tragedy to have witnessed the steady erosion of the area's employment, skills, and industrial base. Matters looked particularly bad up to the time when I first entered the House. I remember having several exchanges with Ministers at that time about the needs of the Trafford park area. That led ultimately to the creation of the urban development corporation. As I urged that upon Ministers, it would have been churlish to do anything other than support the Government's creation of that particular corporation.

Together with many other people in the area, I have done what I can to support the corporation's efforts to bring jobs and industry to Trafford park. That said, although it may have seemed, when the corporation first came into being, that Trafford had turned the industrial corner, the recession of the past few years has seen a haemorrhaging of jobs. Today's debate has largely been prompted by the almost simultaneous loss of 1,000 jobs by four major employers—Texaco, Massey-Ferguson, the Co-op, and GEC.

Every one of those job losses is a tragedy, but I will dwell on GEC—formerly Metrovic—because it was once the biggest employer in the Trafford park area. As a training ground for young apprentices, it was reckoned to be among the finest in the world. For GEC to announce virtually the end of turbine manufacture there is viewed by many—myself included—as a betrayal of GEC's background and of the community which put so much into that company. I hope that those words reach the company, and that it appreciates the strength of feeling about the way it has treated the area.

Trafford park and the Manchester travel-to-work area have seen 7,703 redundancies in the 12 months from 1 June 1991 to 31 May this year, while Greater Manchester has suffered job losses totalling well over 13,000—an increase over the previous year. Far from the recession coming to an end in Greater Manchester, it is deepening.

The jobs being lost are largely those which contribute to my constituency and to those of other hon. Members the skills network which is so vital to a modern economy. We have seen massive job losses in electrical and mechanical engineering, and in the manufacture of transport equipment. Those are all industries vital to the industrial strength and future not only of the north-west but of the whole country.

In the years since the economy started turning against the manufacturing sector, we have had a Government who are hostile, or at least indifferent, to its plight. The pound has ridden at ridiculously high levels on the international currency exchanges, making exports of our manufactures unrealistic. Interest rates have reached record levels, which again makes it extremely difficult to invest. The rate of investment in industry and manufacturing bears that out, and investment in manufacturing in the north-west has fallen greatly.

The net consequence of that lack of investment has been a loss of jobs and an erosion of the skills base. The level of unemployment in my constituency has almost returned to that reached in the first recession under the Conservative Government of the early 1980s. It is no surprise that the increase has been marked by a similar massive increase in crime. Crime is often part of the black economy into which our young people are siphoned off due to lack of training opportunities or adequate jobs. My constituency is home to the centre of the drugs trade in the north-west. That is a source of great regret to me and I would far sooner see my young people employed at Trafford park.

Last week I received a letter from a constituent—it is typical of many—who wrote:

"Yet another letter about the recession I am afraid. I am only 51 and find it very hard to find work and have been out of work apart from some casual work for 18 months due to redundancy and I feel that in some cases this is an act of discrimination due to my age etc. as I am a young and active chap. I feel bitter at times"

My constituent, in common with many people, wants secure employment. Such people once had the economic security which meant that they and their families had a future. Because of redundancy, the recession and mass unemployment, those people are now not only out of work but without hope and living in despair.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): This is almost a debate about despair. The Trafford park industrial estate served all Manchester, including Bury and Bolton. GEC was the traditional centre of great skills. We are told that there is a national shortage of skilled people, but they have been dissipated. Would my hon. Friend care to comment on the amalgamation between GEC and Alsthom, which is causing great concern? It is feared that, because of that amalgamation, jobs will go to France. It is possibly because of the management——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but his intervention is far too long, especially in a short Adjournment debate.

Mr. Eastham: I apologise. This is an important debate about an issue of great concern. I wonder whether my hon. Friend would like to underline my——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman must resume his seat.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend has touched upon an issue with which I have considerable sympathy.

It is significant that Texaco and Massey-Ferguson have decided to retrench their activities in different parts of the country. As my hon. Friend said, GEC is now an Anglo-French company. There is a strong suspicion that the order book for France is full, while that for Britain is relatively empty. I accept that a limited number of jobs will be retained in Britain for a few years, but the effective closure of the turbine manufacturing plant in Trafford park is, in part, due to the internationalisation of GEC and the fact that the French always make sure that they protect

[Mr. Lloyd]

their domestic industry. The French have an active policy of supporting investment and have a product purchasing policy which favours the home industrial base. GEC saw virtually no new orders of turbines from the previously state-owned Central Electricity Generating Board or its successor company after privatisation.

The same applies to a company in my constituency. Another part of GEC is responsible for the manufacture of traction—railway engines and so on. Once again, the lack of home demand over the years has meant that GEC Traction has suffered unfair competition relative to other international producers. Nowadays large-scale engineering is increasingly carried out on an international basis by major international consortia such as GEC Alsthom in Manchester, Siemens and Braun Bovary. Those are all large international producers and, except for the British companies, all have support from their Governments and home economies, so they at least have an opportunity to invest in research and development knowing that their home base will generate the demand which justifies such investment. In Britain, almost uniquely, such investment does not take place because the Department of Trade and Industry does not sponsor our domestic producers. That is a matter of considerable regret, not just to Opposition Members but to many people throughout our manufacturing sector. We need the Government to take a different view of the manufacturing sector.

I appreciate why the Under-Secretary of State for Employment is here tonight. Industry debates could be answered by Ministers from many different Departments. We want the Government to take a co-ordinated approach to the manufacturing sector. It is not enough simply to invest in a development corporation which, although it will do what it can, can do nothing about the recession which is still laying sway to industry throughout the land. Indeed, confronted with recent job losses, the development corporation said that it was trying to take various steps. It claimed, for instance, that it was trying to create 1,600 jobs on the Massey-Ferguson site. Those jobs may come to fruition in the future, but jobs have disappeared here and now. The development corporation made it clear that the recession was having a detrimental effect on its efforts in the area. Sponsored by the Department of the Environment, the development corporation is not enough of itself.

I hope that the presence of a former Secretary of State for the Environment in the Board of Trade means that we shall begin to have a co-ordinated approach between the different Government Departments. We need a clear message from the Minister today, not just to Trafford park but to the whole of the manufacturing sector, that the days are over when the former Chancellor, Nigel Lawson, said that manufacturing was all about the sunset industries and that Britain was looking to a brave new future of services. The Minister must assure us that such political rhetoric and economic nonsense is a thing of the past and that the Government will target the manfacturing sector as the most important part of Britain's economic future. Unless the Government work in that spirit, the problems that I have outlined in Manchester will continue and many of the productive centres of Britain will continue to see devastation and waste.

Beyond a commitment to the manfacturing sector, we need a commitment to policies which will give manufacturing a chance. For instance, we need a Government who support exports. There are certain problems with export credit guarantees. I do not know whether the Minister can comment on those tonight, but I hope that he will take the matter on board and convey the problems to colleagues at the Department of Trade and Industry who can deal with it. Our exporters certainly feel hobbled by the problems that they face with the Export Credits Guarantee Department when they compare their position to that of exporters in similar industrialised countries.

We need a Government who will place emphasis on investment in manufacturing. Manufacturing in my area has been cut back dramatically. The Government must make such investment worth while. Until interest rates come down, it is unrealistic to believe that manufacturing investment will race forward, but the Government must sponsor those who are prepared to invest in the manufacturing sector and ensure that that investment leads to the creation of new, highly skilled jobs.

The tragedy of what has happened in Trafford park in recent years is that highly skilled, high value jobs which used to be at the heart of the region have been replaced with relatively semi-skilled and unskilled jobs. I do not complain about any job that is created, but we must begin to retrain all our people, not merely those in selective parts of the country, if we are to give them the dignity that they deserve. We must begin to turn the corner. At present, many of our young people have no hope of employment or, even if they have, they believe that there is no long-term Government commitment to it. Without any commitment to invest in training our young people, the future for districts such as mine is bleak.

I hope that the Minister can give some words of comfort tonight. I hope that I have not spoken in a partisan manner, although I obviously had some criticisms to make. I hope that, in turn, the Minister will respond by making it clear that the Government are committed to the Trafford park district, to manufacturing industry and to a future for my constituents which will bring them long-term jobs and rewards.

11.57 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I congratulate the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) on securing tonight's debate. I notice that he is supported by the hon. Members for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) and for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan). I fully understand the concerns and needs of the constituents of the hon. Member for Stretford, and his commitment to them.

The Government accept that job losses have occurred in Trafford park and that the unemployment rate in the Manchester travel-to-work district is higher than any of us would wish it to be. However, without wishing to minimise the problems—no Government Member wants to do that—I note that the rise in unemployment in the hon. Gentleman's constituency during the past two years has been less than in the north-west region as a whole, where the rise has been less than in the rest of the United Kingdom.

There is no doubt that unemployment is not just a matter for local or even national concern: it is an international problem. More than 15·75 million people are currently unemployed in the 12 countries of the European Community. In the latest three-month period, unemployment has risen in all EC countries except Germany. In France it has reached its highest level ever, and it is also a problem outside the Community—the United States of America has its highest unemployment rate for five years.

However, although as in those other countries the United Kingdom's unemployment level is increasing, there are clear signs that the rate at which it is rising is diminishing. The average increase in the three months to April was the lowest since the three months to September 1990.

There are also grounds for cautious optimism in the wider economy. Surveys conducted over recent weeks show increasing confidence among consumers and businesses. The prices of goods leaving the factory gates are at their lowest for four years.

The hon. Gentleman asked for a co-ordinated approach. There is a co-ordinated approach throughout the Government. It is important not only to create the right climate, but to ensure that interest rates are reduced. Since we joined the exchange rate mechanism in 1990 there has been a 5 per cent. decrease in interest rates. There is a co-ordinated approach, not just from the Department of Employment or the Department of Trade and Industry, but from Treasury.

I fully realise that the job cuts announced by Massey-Ferguson, GEC and the other companies mentioned by the hon. Gentleman will be a loss to the Trafford park district. As in almost all cases where workers stand to lose their jobs, I am sure that there are arguments, some more valid than others, that can be mounted against the cuts. Ultimately, such decisions are for the commercial judgment of the companies involved. It would be counterproductive for the Government to interfere. It is relevant that neither set of job losses is to take place immediately, and the companies have offered considerable help to their employees, including the chance to move to other parts of the country—although I realise that that option does not suit everyone. I understand that the local employment service is in touch with the companies and with Texaco, and is offering help—although I stress that the majority of the job losses have not yet occurred.

It would be wrong, however, to allow the impression to gain ground that all is doom and gloom. Far from it. The job losses are by no means the full picture. There is a brighter side. New investment is being attracted to the area, and jobs are being created. In particular, I wish to highlight the work of the Trafford Park development corporation, one of the 10 urban development corporations in England and Wales that aim to encourage investment and bring derelict land and buildings into effective use. I was pleased to hear the hon. Member for Stretford pay tribute to the vast amount of work that the corporation has done, and I hope that co-operation spreads across all parties in the Manchester area.

A survey commissioned by the Trafford Park development corporation has shown that, in its five years of operation, 460 new companies have located their business in Trafford park, and that in the same period an additional 9,500 jobs have been created—an increase of nearly 40 per cent. on the 1987 figure. That is particularly encouraging, as is the fact that the highest level of employment in Trafford park is in the engineering sector and 48 per cent. of all employees are in manufacturing.

I readily accept what has been said about the importance of manufacturing; I also accept that there is a need to ensure that skills and training play a vital part in industry. That, however, is part of a wider debate, and we do not have time to discuss it fully tonight. Perhaps we shall be able to do so tomorrow.

Two noteworthy investments in Trafford park should be recorded—no doubt the hon. Member for Stretford and his hon. Friends are familiar with them. I refer to Proctor and Gamble's multi-million pound development, which will create 250 new jobs, and British Rail's choice of Trafford park for its £11 million channel tunnel freight terminal, which could create up to 4,000 jobs in the area. Those are substantial investments, which are important to the future of the Manchester area.

I also note that the development corporation has recently announced a package of planning permissions and investment decisions, which should create 1,600 jobs, as well as possible construction jobs. Moreover, although they are not in his constituency, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will welcome some of the other major developments in the Manchester area. They include the new metro supertram system, which is now operational and has created over 100 jobs—and which was funded by the Government; the airport's second international terminal, which will double its capacity; and the attractive leisure and office developments at Salford quays.

I am sure that we all welcome the decision to provide £55 million to support Manchester's bid for the Olympic games in the year 2000. It will be used to provide an Olympic arena and other sports facilities. If, as we all hope, Manchester's bid is successful, there will be a wealth of opportunities for new employment.

Despite those successes in creating jobs in the area, there are—and will continue to be—unemployed people who need help. The Government are now providing a wide and versatile range of help for such people, much of which is channelled through the employment services and the training and enterprise councils—or TECs, as they are more familiarly known. Our overall aim is to provide help which is tailored to the individual and meets his or her needs, and which enables such people to find the most suitable employment—including self-employment—as quickly as possible.

All newly unemployed people are offered positive help on the road back to employment by the employment service's new client advisers. Such help includes news of the availability of vacancies, alternative employment, training opportunities and employment service initiatives. The adviser also helps such people to draw up a back-to-work plan that charts the best course of action to enable that person to get back to work.

Those who have not found work within 13 weeks are offered further interviews and help. In the year ending March 1992, in the Manchester central employment service area—which covers the constituency of the hon. Member for Stretford—nearly 64,000 such interviews with claimant advisers took place. Those interviews have helped over 8,300 people to find jobs or other positive outcomes, such as training or job clubs. I think it important to address training and retraining, and to provide opportunities for people to take advantage of those facilities.

Mr. Eastham: We are grateful for any innovations, but certain established industries in Trafford park, such as traction, are not being used. The Minister referred to the success of Metrolink, but some of the work was done in Milan and one wonders why it was not possible to do it in this country.

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman tempts me to go further than I wish to go now. He ought to address that question to the people who were responsible for constructing the supertram. He should ask them why they did not feel that it was either possible or right to buy British products. I accept that it is a relevant question, but I cannot answer it this evening.

Mr. Tony Lloyd *rose*——

Mr. McLoughlin: I do not wish to be diverted down this path, but I shall obviously give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Lloyd: The traction for Metrolink was made in Trafford park. I should hate the public to be under any illusions about that.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. That is why I do not want to go down that path now. There are wider questions, to which the hon. Member for Blackley referred.

As for the services that are in place to try to help people to find jobs and to help those who are unemployed, we have job clubs, job interview guarantees, job review workshops, job search seminars and other employment service initiatives to help the unemployed to identify employment and training opportunities. They are all available to the hon. Gentleman's constituents and to people elsewhere in the Manchester area.

The full range of the Government's training and enterprise programmes are also available to the hon. Gentleman's constituents, including the youth training scheme for 16 and 17-year-olds, employment training and employment action for unemployed adults, and help in some cases with business start-ups.

The training and enterprise measures are delivered through the Manchester training and enterprise council, one of the 82 training and enterprise councils now fully operational in England and Wales. The successful completion of the network means that we now have in place an unprecedented partnership of Government, business and individuals, with over 1,200 front rank business leaders across the country serving on their local TECs. All that is backed by more than £2 billion of Government funding. We believe that this partnership is the best way to skill Britain for the 1990s and beyond.

We are taking the provision of skill training and the encouragement of skills very seriously. However, the sole purpose of the TECs should not be thought to be the delivery of Government programmes, important though that is; they have a much wider role. For example, as part of its objectives concerning training for the adult unemployed, Manchester TEC has a number of local, specially tailored initiatives. Skillplan is a guidance, assessment and referral service for unemployed people. Skillplan operates through 12 main sites and on an outreach basis through selected jobcentres.

Manchester TEC is also collaborating in a project in Trafford park aimed at improving employment and training prospects for ethnic minority women. This initiative stems from the fact that there is very low take-up of adult training provision among Asian women. The idea of providing a series of courses prior to taking up employment training or prior to a job itself was the idea of a member of the Asian community.

Another idea that Manchester TEC is pursuing is Manchester TEC/1000. This is another locally grown initiative, aimed at improving the training and employment prospects of 1,000 disadvantaged people, many of them living in areas of social and economic deprivation. There are two promoters for Manchester TEC/1000 in Old Trafford and one in Partington. They have already arranged training, employment, or referrals for 40 of the 124 individuals who have approached them for help in the last six months. I am sure that people welcome these initiatives, because they are important.

In conclusion——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half and hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at eight minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 9 June 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Rural Employment

1. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps she proposes to promote more employment opportunities in rural areas; and if she will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): The Government work with a number of agencies such as the Rural Development Commission and Scottish Enterprise to promote enterprise, economic diversity and employment in rural areas. Using the Employment Service and training and enterprise councils, we have a range of facilities and programmes for people in rural areas.

Mr. Kirkwood: Is the Minister aware of the locally derived initiative that Scottish Borders Enterprise has put together, called "Packaged Training", which is particularly appropriate for rural areas given the distances involved in getting people to training opportunities? Is he also aware that, this year, the budget of Scottish Borders Enterprise for that purpose has been cut from £530,000 to £380,000? Last year, 180 people were given an opportunity to retrain, but, sadly, that number will be cut because the budget for this year has already been used. Will the Minister attempt to find ways of providing extra funds so that such employment opportunities can continue to be provided in the future?

Mr. McLoughlin: As I said, we provide a range of facilities to help in rural areas. The points that the hon. Gentleman raised are matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, and I shall ensure that they are brought to his attention.

Mr. Moss: Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to praise the work of enterprise agencies, particularly those in rural areas such as the Fens Business Enterprise Trust in my constituency? Is he aware that in the current economic climate, funding for such enterprise agencies has become increasingly difficult to obtain? Will he give some consideration to providing more centralised funding to allow that good work to continue?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am not sure that more centralised funding is the way to go about the problem. Perhaps a better way to proceed is to provide money to the TECs, as we have done in the past two years, so that they can make their own decisions. That is probably preferable to the Government's making more centralised decisions. I shall, however, consider my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Youth Training

2. **Mr. Bryan Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment she has made of the quality and quantity of training places available to young people.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): I am satisfied that, across the country as a whole, the quality and quantity of youth training places are meeting the needs of young people and those of the economy.

Mr. Davies: I congratulate the Secretary of State on her appointment, but is she aware that when the chairmen of the north-west regional TECs sought a new Secretary of State, they did so because they wanted increased funds for training? What is her justification for the cuts in financial provision for each youth training place in Oldham and for the cuts in unit costs for training places throughout the north-west?

Mrs. Shephard: I met the chairmen of the north-west TECs recently, and we discussed a number of matters, including funding and flexibility. The hon. Gentleman will understand that there has been an unjustifiable variation in the unit costs for youth training places—a variation of £30 per place—and I think that it was right to bring those costs closer together.

Sir Anthony Durant: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her appointment. What representations has she received from Labour Members about the youth training scheme?

Mrs. Shephard: Very few, because my hon. Friend will know that Labour Members have consistently set their face against youth training; and I believe that the Transport and General Workers Union, which sponsors many Labour Members, voted to boycott youth training. That scandalous state of affairs has not been criticised by Opposition Members.

Mr. Leighton: In welcoming the Secretary of State to her new duties, may I inquire whether she has read the excellent pamphlet published by Youth Aid, the Children's Society and 30 other organisations, entitled "A Broken Promise: A Failure of Youth Training Policy"? It makes it clear that the youth training guarantee is not being delivered and that right across the country, including my constituency, thousands of young people are leaving school with no jobs, no training places and no benefits? What will she do to improve youth training?

Mrs. Shephard: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I have read that important report, and that of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. I must set the concerns expressed in those reports in context; 300,000 young people are successfully engaged in youth training. The Government will ensure a guaranteed place for every young person and no TEC has been or will be prevented from meeting that guarantee by a lack of resources. However, if there is a problem in the machinery, we shall look into it.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: May I, as a Norfolk Member, also congratulate my right hon. Friend on her new appointment? Can she confirm that it is the Government's intention to ensure that every young person not in full-time education from the age of 16 has a training place? Will she visit Norwich at the earliest opportunity to check whether that policy is being carried out to the full?

Mrs. Shephard: I confirm that there is a guaranteed place for every young person who needs one. I intend to visit Norwich shortly.

Mr. Fatchett: I add my congratulations to the Secretary of State on her appointment. Does she recognise that an equally important statistic is not the 300,000 young people on youth training places but the 100,000 who are struggling to find places? Is she also aware that the report produced by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), the former Chairman of the Select Committee, showed that half the TECs were having difficulty meeting the youth guarantee? Is it not a fact that the Secretary of State has been misled by her civil servants, or that she is ignorant about what is happening to youth training—the simple fact being that the guarantee is not being delivered by the Government?

Mrs. Shephard: I repeat that the Government do and will ensure that there is a guaranteed place for every young person. I accept that there is some waiting for places, but that is to be expected, given the importance of placing young people in training that suits their needs. As I said, if there is a problem with machinery, I shall certainly look into it. The machinery should not fail young people.

Disabled Employees

3. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations she has received about the employment of people with disabilities; and if she will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Michael Forsyth): We have received a number of representations about the help that we provide for people with disabilities, including the sheltered placement scheme, the new placing assessment and counselling teams and the training provision available through TECs.

Mr. Thurnham: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his appointment. Will he make it one of his first priorities to examine closely why the public sector falls below the private sector in giving jobs to the disabled? Why does the BBC have one of the worst records of any public organisation, employing only 71 registered disabled among its 25,000 employees? Will he ask the BBC to give free television licences to the disabled until it starts to co-operate with his Department?

Mr. Forsyth: I am sure that the BBC will have broadcast my hon. Friend's message, which I hope will be received. As for the differences in employment practice between the public and private sectors, it is true that, in general, the quotas are least well met by the public sector. But I should say, in defence of both sectors, that the number of people registered as disabled is about 1 per cent. of the work force and the quota is 3 per cent., making it a mathematical impossibility for employers to achieve their legal obligation.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does it not concern the Minister that in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) last week, the Prime Minister confirmed that there was not one disabled person working at No. 10 Downing street? Before the Government lecture the BBC or anybody else, will they put their own house in order?

Mr. Forsyth: I shall see that the hon. Gentleman's comments are drawn to the attention of the Prime Minister.

EC Employment

4. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what policies she has to promote employment for British people within the EC.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We are working to give our people better access to jobs in other EC countries by improving the system for exchanging job vacancies between member states, securing mutual recognition of qualifications and providing information about living and working elsewhere in the EC.

Sir Michael Neubert: With British people keeping fitter and living longer, is it not against both the spirit of the times and natural justice that the European Commission should limit applicants to its posts to people aged 35 or under? Will my hon. Friend do all that he can to root out that blatant example of Brussels ageism?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree. Indeed, the first speech that I made in my new post was on the subject of ageism. It is astonishing that the European Commission should be one of the worst practitioners of ageism. If one wants to apply for a job as a dishwasher or an administrator with the European Commission, one must be under the age of 35. On that basis, I hope that the House will forgive me for pointing out that most of us in this Chamber would be considered too old for the job.

I agree with my hon. Friend that the policy of ageism is not only undesirable but stupid. It diminishes the supply of talent to the economy throughout the Community, and I hope that efforts made to combat ageism will be taken on board by employers throughout the United Kingdom and by the European Commission.

Mr. McLeish: I also welcome the Minister to his new position in the employment team. The whole of Scotland rejoices in the fact that he has now been moved from the Scottish Office. Unfortunately, however, he will now visit upon the unemployed and those who need training the right-wing policies that have done so much damage in Scotland.

Is the Minister aware that, between September 1979 and September 1991, the number of people employed in Britain fell by 13,000? Why do the Government have the most appalling employment record in post-war Britain? Does he accept that, with fewer people working in this country, his policies have failed? We now need urgent action to tackle not only the growing problem of training but the scandal of rising unemployment and the reduction in employment.

Mr. Forsyth: I am sure that the reasons for my moving from the Scottish Office, where I was responsible for education, to Employment were the same as the reasons

for the hon. Gentleman's move from Scottish spokesman on education to employment. The hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that both of us now enjoy a wider brief.

On the hon. Gentleman's point about unemployment in the European Community, surely he would agree with those of us who argue that as there are 15·5 million people unemployed in the Community, our first priority must be to ensure that there are measures to create jobs and get people back to work. What a pity that Opposition Members support so many of the highly damaging proposals coming out of Europe which would destroy jobs in Britain and throughout the Community.

Mr. Rowe: I welcome my hon. Friend's earlier comments about ageism. Does he agree that one of the great difficulties for many people trying to keep employment is the working of the pensions system, which makes it profitable for employers to get rid of people aged 50 and above, and makes it difficult for such people to find employment elsewhere?

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to such difficulties. There are ways round those problems and we have asked managers and jobcentres, in discussion with employers, to draw to employers' attention the benefits of employing older workers and some of the ways round the difficulties to which my hon. Friend has referred.

Sheffield TEC

5. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of those participating in the Sheffield TEC programmes successfully find full-time employment.

Mr. McLoughlin: In the Sheffield TEC area in the year to July 1991, some 65 per cent. of youth training leavers and 38 per cent. of employment training leavers who completed their training were in full-time employment.

Mr. Michie: The Government have been claiming to have met the guarantee month after month. Will they wake up to the fact that those courses are inadequate and not available to most people, and that there is not enough fund money and grants for people to afford to take the training courses—let alone get a job at the end of them?

Mr. McLoughlin: No. The Government will take no lectures from the Labour party on the provision of training, about which it did absolutely nothing when in government. This Government are committed to providing training—a concept totally alien to the action taken by the Labour party when it was last in office.

Mr. Riddick: Does my hon. Friend agree that employment opportunities for people participating in the Sheffield training and enterprise council courses will be severely reduced if the 48-hour working week is imposed on British industry by the European Commission? Will my hon. Friend assure the House that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will fight those proposals and that there will be no compromise?

Mr. McLoughlin: I can assure my hon. Friend that the issue he has raised is in the forefront of our minds. Obviously, the proposals will be negotiated and discussions will take place at Community level. We hope to obtain satisfactory arrangements for the United Kingdom.

Unemployment

6. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans the Government have to reduce the level of unemployment; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government's role is to ensure a sound and stable economic framework within which enterprise can flourish and the battle against inflation can be won. We also wish to ensure that the Department's programmes give the highest priority to getting unemployed people back to work as quickly as possible.

Mr. Worthington: Is the Secretary of State aware that today the voluntary organisation, the Strathclyde poverty alliance, has found that one in 10 of 16 and 17-year-olds in Strathclyde—5,500 young people—are not receiving the Government's youth guarantee? When will the Secretary of State open the books and let us have a full investigation of what is going on in the training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies throughout the country? Does she agree that the Government have broken their promise?

Mrs. Shephard: As I have already said, there is a guarantee of a place for young people. If machinery is failing young people, we need to know about it. I shall certainly look into the matter raised by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Butterfill: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge the important contribution to the British economy made by part-time workers, particularly in the leisure and tourism industries in constituencies such as mine? Does she accept that it would be uniquely damaging to that industry were we to accept the part-time working directive supported by the Labour party, as it would cause untold damage to industries such as leisure and tourism?

Mrs. Shephard: Yes, I agree. A number of the policies supported by the Labour party would increase unemployment. In this country we need a flexible labour market, and opportunities for part-time work and women returners. We shall continue to fight for a flexible labour market.

Ms. Estelle Morris: Is the Minister aware that my constituency of Birmingham, Yardley recently suffered the highest increase in unemployment of any of the 12 Birmingham constituencies—a most unfortunate first for my constituency, which is not a region of traditionally high unemployment? Does she agree that that statistic shows the depth of the Tory recession and the extent of the Government's attack on manufacturing jobs in the west midlands and Birmingham?

Mrs. Shephard: Unemployment is certainly difficult for the individuals and families involved. Tackling unemployment and improving the skills and confidence of the work force are major elements in the Government's inner-city policy. I feel certain that the programmes provided by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Employment will help the hon. Lady's constituents to return to work as quickly as possible.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the great enemies of employment is over-regulation of the labour market? Will she therefore

not only reiterate her opposition to the idea of a 48-hour maximum week and all the other rubbish from Brussels, but recommit herself to deregulation here in the United Kingdom?

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend well knows that the Government are committed to a deregulated labour market. We have made it clear from the outset that the damaging working time directive is unnecessary and has been produced on totally unjustifiable grounds as a health and safety measure.

Mr. Blair: I wish the right hon. Lady every strength in her new position, especially in her relations with the Treasury, where I suspect she will need it most. Does she agree that the most pressing problem that she faces is rising unemployment? If urgent action is not taken, hundreds of thousands more people will face the dole this summer. I urge her to show that the change in her Department is one of substance as well of image. She should abandon the dismal failure of employment action, reverse the policy of running down training for the unemployed, and provide the job and training opportunities that the country would support and that the unemployed desperately need.

Mrs. Shephard: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his good wishes. I wonder whether this is his last but one Question Time in his present position and whether before long he, too, will take advantage of retraining opportunities. I remind him that the Department offers almost 1 million places on employment and training programmes this year, an increase of 100,000 on last year. We are increasing spending on youth training; but, above all, it is the economic framework, to which we are committed and the hon. Gentleman's party is not, which will increase employment opportunities fast.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her appointment. I am sure that she will agree that women Members are doing pretty well. Will she bear it in mind that women and men with disabilities are more punctual and have fewer days off than men? Could that fact be drawn to the attention of those who seek to engage personnel?

Mrs. Shephard: I thank my hon. Friend for her good wishes. She is right to draw the attention of employers and others to people with disabilities. That is a particular responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, who will be taking forward policies in that area.

Labour Statistics

7. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the level of male unemployment in Grimsby *(a)* in 1982 and *(b)* at the latest available date.

Mr. McLoughlin: In June 1983, the earliest date for which figures are available, on the unadjusted basis there were 8,380 men claiming unemployment-related benefits in the Grimsby travel-to-work area. There has been a reduction of 10·4 per cent., leaving a total of 7,507 in April 1992.

Mr. Mitchell: Is it not disgraceful that in the second Government-induced recession unemployment is almost up to the level that it attained in the first Government-induced recession, at about one man in six in Grimsby? Is it not also disgraceful that at such a time the Government are cutting spending on training? Instead of praying for a recovery, which cannot come at present interest rates, the Government should expand the economy and improve spending on training and the quality of its provision.

Mr. McLoughlin: That is an obvious example of a hon. Member who prepared his supplementary before he heard the answer to his main question and stuck to it irrespective of the main answer. As I have said, there was a reduction of 10·4 per cent. in the year to April 1992, the year about which the hon. Gentleman asked. We really expect better of him.

9. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the change in the level of unemployment since 1979; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Seasonally adjusted unemployment in the United Kingdom rose by 1·607 million between April 1979 and April 1992. It is still about 430,000 less than at its peak in July 1986.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I remind the Secretary of State that, as a direct result of Government policy, about 20,000 mining-related jobs have been lost in the Wakefield district during that period. When will the RECHAR and European social fund programmes commence in mid-Yorkshire, and when will local authorities be advised of the details of the schemes that are to be included? What assessment has been made of the implications of Government proposals for the privatisation of coal in areas such as the Wakefield district, not just in terms of miners' jobs but for industries such as mining engineering?

Mrs. Shephard: Jobs in manufacturing, as in all other sectors, have obviously been affected by the downturn in the economy. As the hon. Gentleman knows, manufacturing's share of GDP has declined under all Governments. The programmes that he mentions are matters for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, and I shall draw his attention to the hon. Gentleman's comments.

Mrs. Peacock: Can my right hon. Friend tell the House what percentage of the United Kingdom population is in work and how that compares with our EC neighbours?

Mrs. Shephard: The interesting thing is that 70 per cent. of people of working age in our population are in employment, which is higher than the EC average of 58 per cent.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Does the Secretary of State accept that that is unhealthily complacent of the Government? Will she accept that it is not just a waste for individuals but a waste of resources to keep people unemployed, as it costs £8,600 for each person in loss of benefit and taxation? Will the Government introduce schemes that will put people back to work, build up our manufacturing base and help to achieve the Government's own programme of maintaining services and cutting taxes?

Mrs. Shephard: There is no complacency in the Government. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the best way to put people out of work is to pursue the sort of policies that he and his hon. Friends supported up to the election. The programmes in place and mounted by my Department, the Employment Service and employment

training, are the best possible ways of getting people back to work as quickly as possible. I also remind the hon. Gentleman that two thirds of all the newly unemployed leave unemployment within six months. It is down to the Employment Service to help them to achieve that.

Mr. Jenkin: In seeking to create employment opportunities in the United Kingdom and in resisting, rightly, the European "shirking" hours directive, will my right hon. Friend consider using all means at her disposal and will she help the House to defy the European Court if necessary?

Mrs. Shephard: As I have already said, the United Kingdom has made it clear from the outset that we resist the directive and consider it to be unjustified. We believe that it will impose liabilities on our labour market that we do not need and do not want. I remind my hon. Friend that it is being brought forward, unjustifiably, under the qualified majority voting procedure. On legal challenge, I rule nothing in and nothing out at this stage.

Employment Appeal Tribunals

10. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average time taken for employment appeal tribunals to deal with cases.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The average length of time taken for a case to reach a hearing by the employment appeal tribunals is four months in Scotland and two years in England and Wales—*[Interruption.]* Like hon. Members, I am very concerned about the delays in England and Wales and we are taking action to help reduce them.

Mr. Eastham: I thank the Minister for that reply. The Equal Opportunities Commission considered a case against Lloyds Bank. The case was heard in September 1989 and succeeded. Lloyds appealed and there was a hearing in February 1992. The parties are still awaiting the judgment. If, at the end of the day, the Equal Opportunities Commission succeeds, it will not even receive interest on the money to which it is entitled.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman will understand that I cannot comment on specific cases. However, I agree that such delays and other current delays are unacceptable. We have made arrangements for additional judge time to be made available through my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor. We will also be introducing legislative proposals to allow the employment appeal tribunals president to sit alone in certain cases. Also, additional court and administrative staff have been appointed.

Sir Dudley Smith: Will my hon. Friend remind those who bring cases of their responsibilities? Is he aware that a firm in my constituency has twice within recent years been taken before a tribunal only to find that the appellant did not turn up? Considerable legal costs were incurred by the firm concerned.

Mr. Forsyth: I am sure that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not comment on a specific case. It must be in the interests of good industrial relations and good practice if the EAT procedure operates smoothly and effectively. I am sure that there may be something to be learnt from experience north of the border.

Mr. Skinner: If the Minister is going to review the scandalous waiting time of more than two years for appeals, will he consider reverting to what used to happen when people who had been in work for six months were allowed to appeal to an industrial tribunal instead of having to wait until they had been in work for two years? Do that as well.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman, uncharacteristically, seems to be confusing two things. The question is on employment appeal tribunals, and I have given an assurance in that respect. He is tempting me to go into a wholly different area—a temptation which I shall resist.

Training and Enterprise Councils

11. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what her policy is towards training and enterprise councils which build up reserves from their block grant.

Mr. McLoughlin: TECs are able to earn surpluses from increased efficiency. They are required by their contract with us to use such surpluses to further the objectives set out in their corporate and business plans.

Mr. Paice: I thank my hon. Friend for his answer. I am sure that he will agree that, in some parts of the country, training providers experience difficulty in finding the workplace element of YT. They therefore keep trainees in workshops for longer, which costs more. Will he undertake to encourage TECs to recognise the extra costs on training providers, rather than using the money to build up sometimes unnecessarily large reserves?

Mr. McLoughlin: I have received representations on this matter. The TECs' contracts make clear the priority that is attached to their training objectives. A significant part of their funding relates to trainees' achievements, which is an incentive to invest in improving the quality of their training provision. However, I shall seriously consider my hon. Friend's point.

Ms. Coffey: Is the Minister aware that engineering training places for young people in Stockport are vacant because High Peak TEC cannot afford to fund them? Does he think that that reflects the Government's failure to provide proper training opportunities for young people and to provide them with the skills that they can invest in industry for the future?

Mr. McLoughlin: A TEC must consider what is required in its area. I am not aware of the specific problem to which the hon. Lady refers, but I shall consider it. However, TECs are best suited to decide what is required in their area. No one would say that they should provide training places if people do not want to attend such courses.

Employment Law

12. **Mr. Duncan-Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how she will strengthen the rights of individuals, in the field of employment law, in accordance with citizens charter proposals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We intend to introduce legislation to give individuals new rights to restrain unlawfully organised industrial action in the public and

private sectors. In addition, the legislation will ensure that individuals' consent is required before deductions for trades union subscriptions are made from their pay and will give individuals greater freedom to belong to the union of their choice.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: May I take this opportunity to congratulate my hon. Friend on his recent appointment? In the light of the recent report in the *Sunday Mirror*, in which the deputy general secretary of the National Union of Public Employees made a statement to the Labour party —"No say, no pay"—does not he think it disgraceful that he should be able to threaten the future employment——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's question is not relevant to the question on the Order Paper. We shall move on to the next question.

Community Work

13. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has for introducing a community work requirement for the payment of unemployment benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have no such plans.

Mr. Evans: I thank the Secretary of State for that reply. Is she aware that many of the long-term unemployed are layabouts? They should have to do community work before receiving benefit. The taxpayers are sick and tired of financing these layabouts. Will she introduce new legislation so that for every year that these layabouts are on the dole one week's employment benefit is stopped? Will she introduce that legislation, because after the next election the lot opposite are going to be the new long-term unemployed?

Mrs. Shephard: The taxpayers have every right to expect good value for money from programmes designed for unemployed people. I should like to reasssure my hon. Friend that we are already providing a wider variety of help than ever before through employment and training programmes to get long-term unemployed people back to work. That includes, of course, help for unemployed people to improve their skills on employment action, and I hope that that reassures my hon. Friend.

Mr. Battle: Given that the Treasury today announced that it has revised the estimate of economic growth down to 0·5 per cent., is not the implication that at least 3·5 million real people will be unemployed by Christmas? Will not that be a drain on the nation's resources that none of her schemes will tackle?

Mrs. Shephard: What is certain is that if the Labour party had been elected, with its wholly unrealistic economic policies, that total would have been reached and passed.

Mr. Rathbone: Will my right hon. Friend consider the particular difficulty of people who left school at 16, went through training and into a job but who, through no fault of their own, now find themselves unemployed? There seems to be a gap in benefits for them.

Mrs. Shephard: Entitlement to benefit, as my hon. Friend will know, is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, but there are special arrangements for young people who find themselves in the circumstances that my hon. Friend describes.

Industrial Hazards

14. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many establishments are required to register under the Control of Industrial Major Hazards Regulations 1989.

Mr. McLoughlin: As at 31 December 1991, a total of 289 establishments had been notified to the Health and Safety Executive as "top-tier" sites under the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984.

Mr. Lloyd: Will the Minister confirm that such sites could represent the highest potential risk to public safety? Will he also confirm that the Health and Safety Executive has been incredibly dilatory in assessing the real level of risk in those places? Does he intend to communicate directly with the HSE to ensure that a proper assessment is made and that public safety is assured?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He is correct to mention the HSE's diligence in carrying out its duties under the regulations. I shall pass on the hon. Gentleman's comments, and he can be sure that the Government will ensure that the HSE carries out its obligations.

Mr. Simon Coombs: Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to congratulate HSE inspectors around the country on their work with hazardous substances in very hazardous circumstances? Are they not worthy of the highest praise, rather than the criticism that we hear too often from the Opposition?

Mr. McLoughlin: Indeed they are. Most people who come into contact with the HSE and its inspectors are very impressed by the professional way in which they carry out their work.

Mr. Cryer: Is the Minister satisfied that there are sufficient health and safety inspectors in post to ensure that all the major hazard sites—and, indeed, all the minor hazard sites—are inspected and properly assessed because, as he knows, many small factories are not inspected for many years at a time due to the grave shortage of qualified inspectors? Are the Government going to do something about that?

Mr. McLoughlin: I go part of the way with the hon. Gentleman. It is right that some of the bigger sites have safety in mind in relation to their responsibilities to the community and to their employees and that care must be taken at some smaller sites. However, I am confident that there are enough inspectors to carry out the work.

Women Workers

15. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she has any plans to accommodate the special needs of women at work.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I will look at a range of issues relating to the needs of women at work with the help of the new working group which I announced on 20 May.

Mrs. Gorman: Can my hon. Friend confirm that almost half the work force in Britain now comprises women and that in many areas of the country the new industries which are replacing the old industries are especially suitable for women? Does she agree with a publication out this week on equal opportunities, which states that women's criteria in working are often quite different from those of men? Women value part-time work and flexibility more than high wages and security of employment. It is, therefore, extremely important that we resist pressure from the European Community to make the conditions of work for men apply to women.

Mrs. Shephard: I believe that my hon. Friend is referring to the report published yesterday by the Institute of Economic Affairs. I have not yet had time to consider that report. However, I remind my hon. Friend that the authors are mostly American and that their experiences and views may well be coloured by the American experience of positive discrimination legislation, which is unlawful in this country. However, I agree that women and men benefit from a flexible labour market and especially from the opportunity of job sharing and part-time work in the way that my hon. Friend describes.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 June.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is visiting Colombia to have discussions with President Gaviria on a wide range of issues. He will carry out other official duties including an inspection of an anti-narcotics police training school.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Leader of the House aware of the major argument that broke out in Rio de Janeiro last night at the Earth summit between my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), Labour's spokeswoman for overseas development, and Baroness Chalker, the Minister, on the £10 billion decline in the Government's aid programme over the past 13 years? Will he confirm that when the Prime Minister told the House last week that over the past 13 years since the fall of the Labour Government, there has been a real increase in overseas aid as a proportion of gross domestic product, he was wrong, he was in error, and had not done his homework?

Mr. Newton: I cannot say that I have had a detailed blow-by-blow account of the conversation in Rio last night. What I do know is that underlying my right hon. Friend's statement last week is the fact that we spent more than £1·8 billion in the past financial year—an increase of 4·7 per cent. in real terms over the previous year. Our aid is planned to continue to grow in real terms to almost £2 billion in 1994-95. I also hope that the hon. Gentleman will point out to his right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, who claimed that we had cut by half our aid to third-world countries, that our aid has gone up from £727 million to more than £1·8 billion in the past financial year.

Mrs. Lait: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the new common agricultural policy agreement led by the British Government is advantageous to the British consumer, fair to the British farmer and is likely to break the deadlock at the general agreement on tariffs and trade talks?

Mr. Newton: I very much agree with my hon. Friend that the agreement is not only very advantageous to this country and to the sensible development of agricultural policies in Europe, since it reduces the burden of the CAP on consumers by £8 billion for the Community as a whole, but it will help to restore the credibility of the Community in the GATT negotiations and will make a settlement of those negotiations, devoutly desired by hon. Members of all parties, more likely.

Q2. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 June.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hanson: Is the Leader of the House aware that since privatisation the number of water cut-offs has trebled, and that in Wales it has increased even further? Is he further aware that since privatisation the salaries and bonuses of water company chairmen have risen by 290 per cent., and that in Wales they have risen by 211 per cent? Is that not a case of Tory policy making the rich richer and the poor poorer? Will the right hon. Gentleman today take the opportunity to condemn the water companies for their actions, and will he put pressure on the authorities to take steps in this regard?

Mr. Newton: What I am aware of is that, largely as a result of the inaction of the previous Labour Government —*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. This is a waste of precious time.

Mr. Newton: And—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order and hear what the Leader of the House has to say.

Mr. Newton: And the—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. It is now my turn. Will the House please come to order, so that at least I can hear what the Leader of the House has to say?

Mr. Newton: What I am aware of is that, as a result of long neglect of water investment under the previous Administration, there has been a considerable need to improve investment in supply and water quality. Since privatisation, the level of water investment has doubled, and it has more than doubled since five years before privatisation.

Q3. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 June.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the first-ever visit by a serving Prime Minister of this country to any country in South America? Does not our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's choice of Colombia for his first port of call give us an opportunity to endorse our historical, if somewhat neglected, links with that country; to thank it for its support during the Falklands war; and to promote further co-operation in our joint efforts to fight the menace of drug trafficking?

Mr. Newton: I agree with my hon. Friend. This first-ever visit by a serving British Prime Minister to a South American country is indeed very welcome: it reflects the factors mentioned by my hon. Friend, and provides a further opportunity to enhance the already close co-operation that exists between this country and Colombia in combating the drugs menace.

Mr. Hattersley: Can the Leader of the House confirm that information given to newspapers yesterday by the Foreign Office that Britain is attempting to negotiate a protocol to the Maastricht treaty, to prepare the House for a resubmission of the Maastricht Bill?

Mr. Newton: What I can tell the right hon. Gentleman is that the possibility to which he has referred is clearly one among a range of others that can sensibly be considered in the uncertain circumstances that have followed the Danish referendum. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Newton: I was giving the right hon. Gentleman, I hope, a straightforward and clear-cut answer— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Newton: As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made clear in his statement yesterday, it is obviously necessary, following the Danish referendum last week—this is acknowledged on all sides—to look at all possible ways of moving forward in the wake of the Danish decision. What I indicated in the early part of my remarks does no more than confirm that one of the possibilities which can clearly be considered, but without commitment at this stage, is that to which the right hon. Gentleman referred.

Mr. Hattersley: It is indeed a strange Government who are categorical to newspapers on one day and evasive to the House of Commons on the next. Does the Leader of the House understand that the time has gone when progress can be made on the Maastricht Bill by contrivance and manipulation? There are many of us on both sides of the House, long-standing enthusiasts for European unity—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hattersley: There are many of us on both sides of sides of the House, long-standing enthusiasts for European unity, who will support progress only of a Bill that is clear, honest and comprehensive and which includes those parts of the treaty most of benefit to the British people, and that specifically includes the social chapter.

Mr. Newton: There is a slight contrast, I think, between what the right hon. Gentleman is telling us this afternoon and what his right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) appeared to tell us yesterday afternoon, which was that he was both for and against the treaty, depending upon what happened in other quarters. The British Government's position is absolutely clear and entirely in line with what I said a few moments ago; that is, that it is necessary, not simply for one country—this one—but for 12, including not least the Danes, to consider the position created by the events of last week and to look at various ways forward from there. That is a sensible policy and it is absurd for the right hon. Gentleman to pretend that there is a simple, neat and immediate answer.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there are few less agreeable sights than that of a pack of greedy voyeurs on the make? Will he please convey the good wishes of the House to the Prince and Princess of Wales, our thanks for their past services and hopes for their future happiness?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will understand that I would not wish to be drawn into comment on the stories that have been appearing in the press, but there will be very widespread support in all parts of the House for the comments made by the Press Complaints Commission yesterday. As my hon. Friend knows, our right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage will take into account the views of the Press Complaints Commission in his forthcoming review of press self-regulation, which is due to start in July. He will have the support of the whole House in doing precisely that.

North Atlantic Treaty

Q4. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if it is the intention of Her Majesty's Government to initiate discussions at the forthcoming NATO ministerial meeting in Oslo on matters relating to article 4 and article 12 of the North Atlantic treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

Articles 4 and 12 of the North Atlantic treaty were not discussed. But the North Atlantic Council communiqué, copies of which have been placed in the Library, made it clear that NATO was prepared to support peacekeeping activities on a case-by-case basis under the auspices of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe.

Dr. Godman: With reference to article 4 of the treaty, and more specifically paragraph 17 of United Nations resolution 757, will the Leader of the House confirm that NATO forces will not be employed in a peacekeeping role in the former republic of Yugoslavia except with the unanimous agreement of the 16 nations which comprise NATO and under the specific command of the United Nations? If such a role is even to be considered, will Her Majesty's Government press the case for the command structure to be European, rather than American-led?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that work is in progress within the alliance to establish precisely how and under what conditions NATO might undertake peacekeeping activity on behalf of or under CSCE auspices. Clearly, the expectation is that such activity would be conducted in consultation with our European partners in that organisation.

Points of Order

Madam Speaker: Before we move on to public business, I must hear a point of order from Mrs. Jackson.

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I should be grateful if you would advise the House whether it is in order for the Member of Parliament of a neighbouring constituency—Sheffield, Hallam in this case—to, in the words of my constituents,

"be very involved and helpful"

in advising them how to go about presenting a petition to the Prime Minister on Thursday without any reference to me as constituency Member of Parliament. He has done so to the extent that my constituents now understand that the only way to obtain a favourable decision from the Secretary of State for Education on an application for grant-maintained status or against the closure of a school is to have the petition presented by a Conservative Member.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Lady—*[Interruption.]* Order. I have a point of order to answer, and that I am going to do. The hon. Lady knows that that it is not a question of order, but she also knows that it is a matter of the convention of the House. I say clearly that if, for any reason, a Member has cause to take up a matter that affects another Member's constituency, it is the established practice in the House to inform that Member.

While I am on my feet, may I say this in general for the benefit of Members of long-standing and, in particular, for the benefit of new Members? In the heated atmosphere of this place, the common courtesies are far too often neglected. *[Interruption.]* Order; I am speaking. It is essential that the established courtesies be maintained for the sake of good working relationships in this Chamber and in the House in general. I hope that that is taken to heart by every Member, whether new or of long-standing. I shall now move on to public business.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This is an entirely different and uncontentious point of order. Today and yesterday prayers began at 2·29 pm. This may seem a small point, but sometimes those of us who are regular attenders at prayers time it to the last minute and we would have been excluded today and yesterday, and several times last week. Could the matter be looked into?

Madam Speaker: If the hon. Lady is saying that occasionally I stride out too rapidly in the Speaker's procession, I will take it into consideration.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In Question Time you will have heard the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) refer to unemployed people as "layabouts". You know that many millions of people in this country are unemployed and have no alternative but to watch television in the afternoon. They will have seen him make that statement and will be deeply distressed. Will you from the Chair refute that suggestion and make it clear that that is not the view of the majority of Members?

Madam Speaker: That sounds like an extension of Question Time, and I shall certainly not allow the Chair to get involved in that. All Members are responsible for the statements that they make, and I hope that in making them they will be guarded and courteous to each other and to people outside the House.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order——

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Two hon. Members are on their feet at the same time. I call Mr. Winnick.

Mr. Winnick: You spoke about common courtesy, Madam Speaker. The House has a responsibility for all citizens. People who find themselves unemployed and who are victims of Government policy——

Madam Speaker: Order. Please come to the point for me.

Mr. Winnick: If a section of the community has been attacked, and if a slur has been cast because an hon. Member has described them as "layabouts", can you, Madam Speaker, advise me on how we can defend people who are not in a position to defend themselves?

Madam Speaker: I have already attempted to deal with that. By no means is the Chair getting involved.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. May I thank you for being clear about the common courtesies of the House and may I draw to your attention the fact that, during the previous Parliament, my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) was mentioned twice by Opposition Members who did not acknowledge the normal courtesies of the House by notifying him that his name was to be mentioned in the Chamber? Could you reiterate that the normal courtesy is for hon. Members to notify one another when they intend to visit and to speak in their constituencies?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is correct. If a Member or his constituency is named in the House, he should be notified in advance. Of course it is also courteous to tell other Members when an official visit is to be made to their constituency.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is it an extension of the last point of order?

Mr. Banks: No.

Madam Speaker: In that case, I will hear it.

Mr. Banks: Would you confirm that, under the Mental Health Acts, you have the power to section? Perhaps you would contemplate using that power.

Madam Speaker: On that note, it is time for us to proceed with the business of the House.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Madam Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the Questions on the 15 motions on statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

RATING AND VALUATION

That the draft British Alcan Primary and Recycling Ltd. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft British Gas plc. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft British Railways Board (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft British Telecommunications plc. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Electricity Generators (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Glasgow Underground (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Lochaber Power Company (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Mercury Communications Ltd. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Scottish Hydro-Electric plc. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Scottish Nuclear Limited (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Scottish Power plc. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Water Undertakings (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

HOUSING (SCOTLAND)

That the draft Housing (Percentage of Approved Expense for Repairs Grants) (Lead Plumbing and Radon Gas Works) (Scotland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

INDUSTRIAL ORGANISATION AND DEVELOPMENT

That the draft Horticultural Development Council (Amendment) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

VETERINARY SURGEONS

That the Veterinary Surgery (Epidural Anaesthesia) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 696) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Question agreed to.

Opposition Day

[1st Allotted Day]

Ethnic Minorities

Madam Speaker: Before I call the first speaker, I should say that I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.37 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move,

That this House, recognising that the ethnic minorities within British society receive less than their fair share of national resources and remain victims of discrimination and prejudice, calls upon the Government to introduce and implement policies which initially reduce and eventually eliminate the disadvantages which are suffered by these British citizens.

The motion was intended to be uncontroversial between the parties. It contains no criticism of the Government's record or policy. It was drafted in the hope —a vain hope, as it turned out—that the House could unite in unanimous agreement about the need to take immediate, decisive action to reduce discrimination against ethnic minorities. The Government have chosen to table an amendment which manages to be simultaneously pious and partisan. It includes sentiments which sit uncomfortably alongside the statements and speeches made by the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) during the general election. We shall vote against the amendment because, in our view, the time for platitudes has passed and the time for action has come.

In part, we chose this subject for debate because there is a new Home Secretary. We did so not simply to celebrate his appointment but to express the hope that, at least in this particular, he will do better than his immediate predecessors. It is even possible that we at last have a Conservative Home Secretary—I think, the first for 30 years—who represents a constituency which contains members of the ethnic minority community. If that is the case, he must know the extent of the disadvantage from which these British citizens suffer. It was our hope—it remains our hope, despite the amendment—that he will wish to take action that has previously been neglected but is urgently in the interests of this section of the British public.

I emphasise that the motion, and the debate, concern British citizens who are denied the full rights of British citizenship. The facts are indisputable. We know, at one extreme of the social spectrum, that black defendants are denied bail in circumstances in which it would be granted to white suspects. At the other extreme, we know that highly qualified black and Asian job applicants are rejected for no other reason than their racial origins. These are facts which it is painful to repeat because of what they demonstrate about our society, but, unless we acknowledge the existence of the canker, we will not cut it out, and there is no doubt how great the infection is today.

Parliamentary answers given on 22 May this year demonstrate the extent of one form of discrimination. From 1989 to 1991, the average rate of male unemployment was 8 per cent. For white males, it was 7 per cent. For ethnic minorities, it was almost twice that figure, at 13 per cent. For men of Indian origin, it was 10 per cent. and for Afro-Caribbeans it was 15 per cent. For men of Bangladeshi and Pakistani stock, it was 21 per cent.

That discrepancy in job opportunities did not result from the ethnic minorities being less motivated or less qualified than white workers. The truth is quite the opposite. The Commission for Racial Equality, reporting last month, analysed job seekers in the labour market and said:

"The proportion of ethnic minorities with higher levels of qualification is slightly higher than the proportion of white people."

Yet, for those in this group—the most highly qualified, the group in which ethnic minorities have superior qualifications to their white contemporaries—their prospects of getting a job are exactly the same, that is, about half that of a white man or woman applying for the same post.

I do not believe that the Home Secretary will dispute that description, for the Government have acknowledged the existence of discrimination in employment. In February, they published a 10-point guide which they said would remedy what they coyly described as the

"under representation of the ethnic minorities within the employed population".

Nobody, not even the Government, believes that those guidelines will even scratch the surface of the problem. The question that faces the nation is whether we are prepared for such discrimination to continue or are willing and now ready to initiate decisive action. Timing is vital, because jobs are what the black and Asian British need most. Given a fair chance, given an equal opportunity, they would get their fair share of employment. At the moment, equal opportunity is not available to them.

Highly motivated and unusually talented members of the ethnic minorities fight their way to success, but many of the others are caught in a cycle of double deprivation. They are disadvantaged because they are poor. They are either at the bottom of the earnings league or unemployed. Because of their race and their colour, they are unable to escape from their poverty.

I do not seek to diminish the importance of other policies that are designed to eliminate discrimination. It is, for example, wholly unacceptable, at least to me, that although Catholics, Jews and Quakers can set up denominational schools, Muslims are denied that right. It also seems intolerable to me that some hospitals and some schools do not provide meals that respect the religious needs of their Muslim patients and pupils. However, nothing is so important as providing a chance to escape from poverty, and that requires a radical revision of our employment legislation.

The present law is demonstrably inadequate because it is based on specific complaints by individuals, who have been denied employment or promotion because of their race. The onus should be shifted from isolated actions by victims of discrimination to a general obligation placed on employers. Whether that obligation is fulfilled cannot be calculated in terms of precise numbers. Quotas do not work and will not work, and we do not suggest them as a remedy.

We should require that all employers use their best endeavours to employ a work force who are genuinely representative of their local population. A strengthened Commission for Racial Equality should be empowered to monitor and enforce that process. As the CRE makes clear, that involves monitoring. Unless we know which

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companies employ a genuine cross-section of the population, we will not be able to ensure a fair distribution of resources.

Ethnic monitoring has already been introduced into employment in parts of the health service, initially, I believe, when the the new Home Secretary was Secretary of State for Health. I therefore assume that that means that the Government are not opposed to ethnic monitoring in principle. Monitoring is essential if the ethnic minorities are to receive their fair share of jobs. I emphasise, because it is crucial to the debate, that it is a fair share of jobs that we demand. We do not ask for that form of positive discrimination that guarantees jobs to those who are not qualified to perform them or provides minorities with more than their proper share of national resources. All we ask is that action be taken to ensure that the black and Asian British receive what is rightly theirs—rightly theirs in terms of civil liberties and national resources.

The Government should and could immediately announce that they will no longer enter into contracts with companies that cannot demonstrate that they operate fair employment policies. That policy of contract compliance, as it is called, is no doubt regarded in some parts of the House as a revolutionary assault on the free market, but in America, which I suppose those same parts of the House still regard as the home and haven of free enterprise, contract compliance by Government agencies is taken for granted.

I have heard much talk of employers needing to choose the best employees available to them. I accept that without qualification, but statistics prove that the best candidate is often rejected because he or she is a member of the ethnic minorities. What is more, discrimination is often the product of ignorance rather than of outright prejudice. I am constantly being told that the black and Asian British are unemployed because they lack the necessary skills to obtain jobs. Again, statistics prove that that is palpable nonsense. The Government should encourage decent employers to search more diligently, and a decent Government would organise carefully targeted training programmes to fill the few gaps in the market that really exist.

Yet the Government, who claim in their amendment a determination to promote a multiracial society, have acted to prevent local councils from insisting that their contractors operate fair employment practices. Birmingham city council instructed its contractors to recruit from the areas in which it was working and have on its payroll a proper racial balance. The Government legislated to make that instruction illegal, as a result of which thousands of jobs were denied to the ethnic minorities in the west midlands.

Let no one suggest that in a free society we cannot impose pressures on employers that prevent them from engaging the employees of their absolute and unfettered choice. I have to tell the Home Secretary—I hope that I shall have the opportunity to tell him on many occasions as the next five years progress—that my Muslim and Sikh constituents are wholly unattracted by a theory of liberty that condemns them permanently to second-class status. If our theory of democracy ignores their basic needs, we should not be surprised if one day they reject our theory of democracy.

We need more positive employment policies because the ethnic minorities need jobs. We also need them to send a message to society. That essential message is easily described. The Government must demonstrate their abhorrence of prejudice and discrimination and their willingness to do more than just talk about such matters and to take action that will bring those evils to an end. The message we need to send out is that the black and Asian British are citizens of this country and should enjoy all the rights and opportunities of that citizenship, not in theory but in practice. I repeat that the platitudes must be replaced by action.

Dame Angela Rumbold (Mitcham and Morden): I have absolutely no quarrel with the philosophy that the right hon. Gentleman is putting forward—that we must treat all people in this country as equal citizens with equal opportunities. However, having listened carefully to what he said, I have a problem over how exactly he will persuade employers—unless he has some legal or governmental backing or requirement—to tell the world whether they have the correct number of black or Asian employees compared with other employees unless employers use the criterion that they are now using, which is to employ the person who is best qualified for the job.

Mr. Hattersley: The right hon. Lady began her intervention so courteously and supportively that I regret to have to tell her that, although she said that she was listening carefully to what I said, she was clearly not listening carefully enough. I set out and described—I will not bore the House by repeating it—the system of contract compliance which enables, say, the CRE to tell a large company, "We wish to inspect your record to make sure that your payroll is genuinely representative of the area from which you recruit."

I said that that required the ethnic monitoring to which the Home Secretary does not object in principle, since he allowed it at the Department of Health when he was a Minister there. It also requires the CRE to be able to say to a company that is not representative of the area from which it recruits, "Unless you use your best endeavours to recruit members of the ethnic minorities, you will certainly no longer qualify for Government contracts and you will be subject to the penalties that come from breaking the law that specifies fair employment practices." That happens in other countries. It is only because of the peculiar prejudices in this country that it has not been happening here for the last 20 years.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): My right hon. Friend has described precisely the problem confronting my local authority in Stoke-on-Trent. It wishes to do what he outlined, but is prevented from doing so because of the lack of legislation.

Mr. Hattersley: In my prejudiced way, I cited the example of Birmingham city council as an authority that has wanted to introduce certain policies and been prevented from doing so by the Government. Stoke is another example, and we know of other good local authorities that want to implement fair employment practices but have been prevented from carrying them out by the Government, who have had the nerve to table an amendment of undisguised piety on which we shall be required to vote at 7 o'clock.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): The right hon. Gentleman courteously said that he wants this to be a level debate. We should therefore look for ways in which everyone can sort out the problems of racial discrimination. He will know that some changes can be made without legislation. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) pointed out that racism needs to be eradicated from the Labour party. Precisely what will the right hon. Gentleman do on behalf of his party to eradicate racism from the party, while the Conservative party looks for ways to encourage the Government to do as much as they can?

Mr. Hattersley: I suppose that I might just believe, in a moment of supreme charity, that that comment was intended to be constructive. But a more serious judgment would be that it was characteristically trivial. Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I propose to say something worth saying.

The time for platitudes has gone and the time for action has come. The time has gone, too, for the figure manipulation which appears, by implication, in the amendment and which will no doubt be developed by the Home Secretary when he speaks. He draws the attention of the House and, he hopes, the country to the specific grants that have been made available for areas in which ethnic minorities have congregated. He must know that, putting aside those grants—most of them very small and all of them introduced with enormous fanfares—the loss of funds going into inner cities has been enormous and overwhelming because of the reduction of central Government general grant to local authorities.

As a result of that reduction, housing in central areas has deteriorated. School buildings have deteriorated and education committees have been unable to recruit extra teachers to teach English as a second language. Amenities in central areas have also deteriorated. The idea that the Government have put money at the disposal of local authorities that want to help in those matters is not simply untrue but the diametric opposite of the truth.

The Government must decide in the next five years—I hope that they will feel calmer about making a decision in the knowledge that the general election is behind them—whether they believe in a multiracial society. In such a society, diversity is welcomed, not merely tolerated, and the culture, customs and religions of minority groups are respected. In such a society, laws accommodate minority religions and mores. Above all else, a multiracial society does not treat minorities as a problem.

Nothing has done so much harm to community relations in this country as the idea encouraged, I fear, by Government policies, that black and Asian British are a liability. They are not. The idea that ethnic minorities are a problem, with all its damaging results, has been encouraged by successive Home Secretaries. The right hon. Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) was civilised, patrician and courteous about it. The Lord Waddington was not. The right hon. Member for Mole Valley saw it as a political opportunity. However, in their different ways, each fostered the disastrous notion that black and Asian British were such a detriment to society that the Government must use every power at their disposal to prevent any more of them from entering the country, whatever their legitimate claim for entry.

I believe quite the opposite because of my experience. I spend much of my time on the Stratford road in the Birmingham constituency of Sparkbrook and I see how that road has been rehabilitated by the ethnic minorities: the shops are Asian; the restaurants are Kashmiri; the banks are Indian and Pakistani. They have rebuilt that heart in the centre of the community. Anyone who thinks that their entry into Birmingham is anything but an advantage is guided by pure, blind prejudice.

I hope that there can be more positive understanding of that contribution. It must be related to our attitude towards immigration. These days when we speak of immigration we mean a process that is directly relevant to the lives of British citizens living in Britain. Primary immigration, whether or not it was right in the dying days of the empire, is now over for ever. The argument about immigration now involves British citizens living in Britain—the right of wives to be reunited with their husbands and the right of British citizens to be visited by their friends and relations—a right which is still too often denied to the black and Asian British.

One of my constituents is, on the evidence of a great national hospital, dying of cancer. His son has been refused permission to visit him as the immigration service, while accepting the diagnosis—it could hardly have done otherwise—doubts the son's motives for wishing to visit this country. I do not believe that that man would have been excluded from this country had he been white, and I fear that the figures confirm that unhappy conclusion. Last year, one Canadian out of every 4,219 applicants was refused a visitor's permit, whereas one in 32 Jamaicans was refused a temporary visa. The difference was not in the applicants' intentions but in the reaction of the immigration service.

If the Home Secretary truly intended to implement the high hopes of his amendment, he would send an immediate message to the immigration service, particularly those members serving in posts abroad. He would tell them that the Government do not expect them to use every means at their disposal to refuse application for entry, whatever the merits of the application. I have no doubt that the service believes that the present Government expect it positively to look for reasons why visa applications should be refused. That is the tone set by previous Home Secretaries, and by the Government appealing against a tribunal decision that judged a man to be improperly excluded. That impression was also given by the tone and character of the speeches made by the previous Home Secretary. The main reason for this debate is that the present Home Secretary has an opportunity to make it clear that he expects genuine applicants to be allowed entry into this country. I hope that he will say that in exact terms this afternoon.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the case highlighted in *The Independent* of a citizen from the United States who came over here? There was no reason to suspect that he was other than a visitor; he was employed in the United States, where he had status and a home. However, he was refused entry and accused of being associated with the recent disturbances in America. There was no reason to disbelieve what he said, as he went out of the way to publicise his position. One can only conclude—as one of our former colleagues did in a letter to *The Independent*—that the man was refused entry because of his colour and had he been white there would have been absolutely no problem.

Mr. Hattersley: The problem with such examples is that they are all too frequent and we can all add to them. I shall

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take this opportunity to give another even more extraordinary example. A professor of economics who had been lecturing in Germany was flying back to Canada. On the aeroplane he met another professor of economics from this country. The English professor told him that he had a PhD student who specialised in a subject on which the Canadian professor had given his lecture.

The Canadian professor was persuaded to get off the aircraft at Heathrow to talk to the PhD student. The professor was immediately arrested, retained at Heathrow for two days and put on an aeroplane back to Canada. All the information about the professor's qualifications was available, but unfortunately he was black. It gives me no pleasure, but only regret, to state that had the professor been a white Canadian, that would not have happened to him.

I asked the Home Secretary to send a message to his officials, and I should like to hear him send a message to the rest of the public service, that its members should give equal treatment to all. We know—the evidence is depressingly extensive—that in social security offices all over Britain, black and Asian British are asked to prove their entitlement to benefit, whereas members of the majority community are not asked to do so. Evidence can also be provided to show that some officers refuse to issue national insurance numbers to members of ethnic minorities about to enter the labour market until they can prove that they are British by birth or registration. We believe that such practices are intolerable.

The Government should also make it clear that public housing must not be allocated according to rules that in any way discriminate against one group in society. The Liberal council in Tower Hamlets simply refused to rehouse Bangladeshi residents and its action was ruled unlawful in the High Court. No doubt later in the debate we shall hear that council action condemned. Some councils still have qualifying regulations which, by coincidence or by design, discriminate against minorities. Such regulations should be prohibited by law.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Is my right hon. Friend aware that Tower Hamlets council recently started to ask applicants who arrived at the homeless persons unit to prove their immigration status, thereby acting illegally as an immigration authority?

Mr. Hattersley: That will have to be the final intervention, because many hon. Members wish to speak. My hon. Friend's intervention illustrates the general point that there is a tendency by officialdom when confronted with a black, brown or yellow face to suspect that the person is not a genuine British citizen and to require him to prove his status. That should be prevented by law.

Ms. Liz Lynne (Rochdale): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that during the general election campaign some members of the Asian community in Rochdale were threatened and intimidated by some members of the Labour party? In one case, a man who was canvassing for the Liberal Democrats was told by a member of the Labour party that he would lose his grant unless he stopped such canvassing.

Mr. Hattersley: If that happened, I condemn it without qualification. I say "If it happened." I have named the Liberal council that discriminated openly and unlawfully against Bangladeshis and I hope that the hon. Lady or a more senior member of her party will condemn that action that she has described.

Ms. Lynne *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I shall not give way to the hon. Lady again, as I want to make some progress.

There are still qualifying regulations in all areas which are imposed to require the black and Asian British to prove their status. That is wholly intolerable. The Government's belief that anything is justified in the name of immigration control was illustrated by one of the meanest acts in the history of British administration. Four years ago, some children who had been denied entry to this country, because the Government did not accept that they were related as claimed, proved through DNA tests that the Government were wrong. Those children who were still under 18 when the Government were confounded were allowed to enter Britain as the law required. However, the young men and women who had passed that age—the age at which admission is normally agreed—while undergoing the DNA tests to prove that the Government were in error were denied entry.

The only conclusion to be drawn from such petty tyranny is that the Government believe that they must keep the numbers down at all costs, irrespective of the device that is necessary to achieve that aim. That attitude sends quite the wrong signals to the ethnic minorities and to the wider population.

The second and even more damaging illustration of the official attitude to ethnic minorities concerns the reunion of husbands and wives. The immense suffering caused by that policy is, I fear, the product of the Government's failure to understand that marriage may be contracted in a variety of ways and still be lawful. In the official mind, the arranged marriage is confused with a bogus marriage. In a proper multiracial society the law would be able to accommodate marriage customs based on a variety of traditions.

The primary-purpose rule by which applicants who wish to join their wives in Britain are judged is intellectually absurd and morally indefensible. A woman with British citizenship, who theoretically enjoys all the rights that such citizenship provides, is denied the right to live in this country with her lawful husband if, in the opinion of an immigration officer, the man's real object of coming here is to live in Great Britain. Simply stated, the immigration officer has the right in law to read an applicant's mind. Having formed a subjective opinion, the immigration authorities will allow entry only if on appeal the applicant can prove that the immigration officer misjudged and misread his mind. Normally and, I fear, intentionally that is an impossible task.

The case history of this provision shows how squalid the process has become. I have read case note after case note and they all read in a similar way. The applicant is asked his opinion of the United Kingdom. He answers, no doubt with the hope of ingratiating himself with the officer, that he has always admired the United Kingdom and always wanted to live here. On the evidence of that answer it is judged that he contracted the marriage only to enable him to live and work in the United Kingdom, and a legitimate and genuine marriage is separated, almost for ever.

I emphasise that the marriages of which I speak are genuine. They have been contracted in ways to which hon. Members are not accustomed. However, it is the obligation of a multiracial society to accept and allow in law the mores of the minorites, rather than impose upon them the will and wishes of the majority. The genuine nature of the marriages is often demonstrated by years of separation and devotion.

Six months ago I proposed that the primary-purpose rule should be replaced by a more objective test of a marriage's genuine status. One of the criteria against which I wanted applicants to be judged was the constancy of the partners. I have constituents who were married five or six years ago. The husbands have been forced to remain in Pakistan and have seen their wives during a couple of brief holidays since the wedding. The wives have given birth to one or two children. The husbands have supported their families as best they can with remittances. Yet, the immigration service persists in saying that those couples are not genuinely married.

In the judgment in Kumar, the High Court required the Government to take into account what is described as intervening devotion. Some married couples have been reunited by taking the Government to court, obtaining judicial review and being brought together because of the judgment in Kumar. That is a long and often expensive process. It is time that the Government accepted that judgment from the beginning and applied it to all applicants who want to come and remain in this country.

The European Court is now considering a second specific case—the application of Mr. Surinder Singh. If, as is widely assumed, it finds in his favour, it will be possible for a British citizen whose spouse has been denied entry into Great Britain to live with his wife or her husband for a brief period in France or Germany and then move, without let or hindrance, into the United Kingdom. It is worth noting that already an English woman of Kashmiri origin can move to Paris or Rome and use Community law to be reunited with her husband from Pakistan immediately and without any qualification. If, as seems likely, Europe is to make nonsense of the primary-purpose rule, it would be to the Government's credit to take the initiative and do away with the dreadful thing immediately.

It is worth noting that the treatment thought appropriate to British women who marry foreign husbands is regarded by the European Community as unacceptable for citizens of other European countries. Britain is required to treat Community nationals better than we treat our own people. A French woman living in London who marries a citizen of what was once a French colony has the automatic and unfettered right to be joined in this country by her Moroccan or Algerian husband. A British woman does not have the same right to be joined in Britain by a Kenyan, Kashmiri or Indian husband. That is absurd as well as shameful. Nothing would so enhance the Home Secretary's reputation than for him to say today that he will bring that absurd shame to an immediate end.

The defence of the primary-purpose rule is that to replace it with objective criteria would result in some bogus marriages slipping through the net and, although it is rarely admitted, 100, 200 or 300 more young men would thus be allowed into this country. I make my position clear. The Government are so obsessed with keeping the wrong applicants out that they are always casual and sometimes callous about making sure that the right applicants get in. I am certainly prepared to accept the increase in numbers that would be involved in genuine marriages being reunited in this country in the way that they should be.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, who, I suspect, forgets that the general election is over. Nevertheless, I shall let him make his point about numbers.

Mr. Thurnham: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way and grateful to be here after the election. Will he clarify how he works out the figure of 300 extra people coming here if we abolish the primary-purpose rule? That is humbug. Perhaps he remembers that on 5 April, before the election, *The People* issued an Asian edition and an English one. The front page of the Asian issue was plastered with the right hon. Gentleman's promises. He promised everything under the sun, including abolition of the primary-purpose rule. The English edition did not mention a word. Does not that show that the right hon. Gentleman has no answers and is trying to give different messages to different audiences?

Mr. Hattersley: I am open to all sorts of accusations this afternoon, one of which is going on for too long, but the accusation that I have been trying to hide the immigration policies that I support seems difficult to sustain. I believe, and the hon. Gentleman can put it in his election manifesto in four or five years' time, that we must allow the entry of those men who are genuinely married and are genuinely separated from wives with whom they should be reunited. If that involves an increase in numbers, so be it. That is the necessity and obligation of a civilised society.

The test that the Government now face is their real belief in a multiracial society and, in consequence, their real belief in freedom. Sometimes, the ethnic minorities will wish to behave in a way that the majority population finds unnatural and uncomfortable. It would be foolish to pretend otherwise, for that is the nature of the multiracial society. I, for instance, am not an enthusiast for single-sex schools or for religious schools. I do not like the idea of single-sex secondary education or religious-based secondary education. The question is not whether we as individuals like or dislike a proposal but whether we are prepared to allow members of minorities to make decisions for themselves and to run their lives according to their traditions, religions and mores, as long as in doing so they do not damage the interests of the community as a whole.

I fear that our willingness to allow that freedom to ethnic minorities is singularly absent from Government policy. I fear that we have neglected the interests of those citizens in a way that is to this country's shame and may, over the years, rebound enormously to our practical and material disadvantage.

The motion demands that we accept that the black and Asian British are what they are—full and equal citizens of the United Kingdom, with all the rights that that implies and the share of resources that it should provide for them. Labour Members will go on proclaiming the necessity to change policy until that desirable situation is genuinely and fully brought about.

4.17 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"commends the Government's determination to work towards a multi-racial society, to which all ethnic minority communities contribute fully and in which all enjoy equal opportunities, as evidenced by their policies for tackling racial discrimination and disadvantage and for promoting equal opportunities, and by expenditure programmes directed at the special needs of ethnic minorities."

I am open to correction in my understanding of the timing of these matters, but I think that I am right in saying that this may be the last appearance at the Dispatch Box of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). He shakes his head. I look forward to debating with him again. The world will change when that moment comes, because for as long as I have been a Member I have never seen the right hon. Gentleman make a speech from the Back Benches; he has always been a Front Bencher. I therefore thought that he might have planned his swansong on this subject, and I was going to pay tribute to him. If he is now promising me an onslaught on another subject in the near future, I will gladly give way to him.

Mr. Hattersley: I was hoping that the Home Secretary would confirm that he will withdraw the representation of the people legislation that we are due to debate on Monday, when I hoped to debate with him again.

Mr. Clarke: The right hon. Gentleman is right to remind me of that, which at least will be a more partisan discussion.

The right hon. Gentleman rightly began by saying that I had puzzled over the motion before the House and wondered why he was raising ethnic minority issues when I thought that it might be his last speech, forgetting next Monday. I am now reassured that he wishes to make a speech on a matter about which he holds strong views, which, in principle, are not removed from mine.

The right hon. Gentleman is fairly critical of the fact that I thought his motion was partisan and therefore tabled an amendment to it. With respect, the right hon. Gentleman, probably like myself, does not have a non-partisan reputation in the House. He may think that his motion was disingenuous and a statement of the obvious, but I shall seek to persuade him and the House that, whatever problems may face the ethnic minorities, it is not true that they receive less than their fair share of national resources. The House must correct that notion. It is not altogether non-partisan to call on the Government to introduce and implement policies to eliminate the disadvantages of such citizens because the implication is that we have not already been doing that vigorously.

I shall seek to persuade the right hon. Gentleman and the House that not only is the Government amendment not merely a platitude—as he said—because its sentiments are eminently fair, but that it is a more accurate statement of the position because it commends the Government and congratulates them on what they are doing and on having such forceful policies to tackle racial discrimination and disadvantage.

Nevertheless, it is important that we begin by putting on record what has not always been put on record either by the right hon. Gentleman or by other members of the Opposition. Hon. Members of all political persuasions are by and large agreed on the principles that should govern a multiracial, multicultural society. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I frequently face attacks, from Labour politicians in particular, suggesting that the Government's policies are racially motivated and that we discriminate in the policies that we adopt, but that is not the case. When that is said in the heat of political debate, it does not do the slightest good to race relations by encouraging that belief among ethnic minority constituents.

I think that the House agrees overwhelmingly on what should happen in a society such as ours. It should be acknowledged that we are talking about ways and means because we all agree that platitudes are not enough and that action is called for, as the right hon. Gentleman says. The Government's aim is to have a fair and integrated multiracial society. We are determined to stamp out racial discrimination so that all individuals, whatever their race, colour or creed, can have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities. We are prepared to debate the methods by which we achieve that, and that is what this debate should be about.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): The Secretary of State will agree that it is most important to reconcile deeds with words, so will he reflect on the reduction of section 11 funding which has afflicted many parts of the country, including Bradford, and which has clearly adversely affected the disadvantaged, especially the ethnic minorities? Has he any plans to restore or, indeed, to increase the funding so that local authorities such as mine can actively assist ethnic minority communities?

Mr. Clarke: If I may, I shall deal more fully with section 11 later if I do not succumb to the same temptation as the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and give way too often. The total amount of section 11 funding has not been reduced, if one leaves aside an exceptional payment to clear some old ILEA claims, which was made, I think, two years ago. It is difficult to distribute the funding, but we have taken steps to target it better. I shall return to that matter in due course.

Let me deal with one or two issues that the right hon. Gentleman raised with regard to specific actions. I do not want to spend too long on asylum and immigration matters because we shall have plenty of opportunity to discuss them this Session when the Asylum Bill reappears before the House, which it will do shortly. *[Interruption.]* It will shortly, and the reason is not that which I heard the right hon. Gentleman give the other day. It is because we have a longer Session ahead of us and after the election we are taking a look at asylum and immigration matters to ensure that when we reintroduce the Bill we have the opportunity to tackle all the deficiencies in the immigration and asylum system. We are also reflecting a little on some debates, especially those in another place.

I confirm that the guiding principle in dealing with immigration cases is that genuine cases whom this country is happy to admit, whether under the terms of our international obligations towards refugees or of our obligations to those who are entitled to come to this country as dependants, should be admitted. I should like them to be admitted in a more straightforward and less protracted way than is sometimes the case at present as a result of delays in the system which are inflicted on us by dealing with many less well-founded cases of people who are undoubtedly not entitled to come to this country.

We must, therefore, examine the system to ensure that it is effective and fair, that it delivers prompter decisions, thereby enabling us to deal properly with those whom we are happy to welcome to our shores, and that it deals fairly within the rule of law with those whom we are not happy to welcome.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Clarke: I will give way just twice more, after which, as I said that I would not talk about immigration, I will not give way again. We shall otherwise spend the whole time on the subject.

Mr. John Carlisle: Does my right hon. and learned Friend appreciate that the delay in the introduction of the Asylum Bill is causing some concern to Conservative Members, despite the spurious objections by the Opposition? Will he confirm that the delay does not mean that the situation is worsening, and that it is actually rather better than it was when the Bill was introduced before the general election? Will he also confirm that he is confident that, when the Bill comes to the House, the situation will be more under control than it was in the earlier part of the year?

Mr. Clarke: The situation is slightly better than it was when the Bill was introduced because the number of applicants has come down. However, that cannot be relied on and the Bill's provisions are still required. There will be no great delay; the Bill will be reintroduced. We are wholly committed to the policies we enunciated in the Bill before the election and we are taking the opportunity to look a little more widely to see what other causes of delay in the system can be tackled when the Bill is reintroduced. I assure my hon. Friend and most people interested in seeing our obligations under the convention carried out properly that we propose to introduce a Bill that will enable us to deal more promptly with those who are entitled to asylum here, and to reject more clearly and more quickly those who are not. That is in everyone's interests, and that principle could be, and properly should be, applied across the area of applications for immigration and settlement.

Mr. Vaz: Does the Home Secretary agree with the general principle put forward by the Foreign Secretary when he was Home Secretary and introduced the Immigration Bill? He said that good race relations in Britain depended on the maintenance of very strict and oppressive immigration controls. Does the Home Secretary also agree with the statement of his right hon. Friend on that occasion that the immigration service was providing a good customer service?

Mr. Clarke: I am absolutely certain that a slight misquotation of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary took place there. My views on the matter and those of my right hon. Friend are almost identical. I believe that good race relations in this country depend on the maintenance of a strict system of immigration control. They most definitely do not depend on an oppressive system. Reform, such as the Asylum Bill, is required to ensure that the system is not oppressive to the genuine cases because it is unable to cope with the non-genuine. That is the purpose of the reform.

I believe that the immigration service provides a good service. The difficulty in the House when individual cases are cited, as we experienced a few minutes ago, is that it is not the way to approach the whole question of immigration policy. There is a system, which we seek to improve, under which there are prompt appeal hearings for the cases that will, undoubtedly, go wrong. However, newspaper accounts and partial accounts by people who have been turned away of why they believe they were turned away often prove to be incorrect.

The case quoted by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) was answered by the head of the immigration service. The account of it in the newspapers was very partial and was given by a man who arrived with a huge collection of belongings, including his own car, for what he said was a short business visit.

Mr. Winnick: Do I take it that the Home Secretary studied the whole case? I recognise that the Home Secretary and his Ministers cannot study individual cases all the time, and I do not suggest that they should do so. However, in view of the publicity that the case received and the way in which the response came from the immigration service, may I take it that all the papers were looked at, if not by the Home Secretary, by his Ministers? There remains a good deal of disquiet, not only about this case, but about others such as that quoted by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). There is a feeling that not all people are treated alike and that the question of colour comes into it.

Mr. Clarke: I can confirm that the case was examined very closely, because of the nature of the allegations. No Minister or member of the immigration service would accept a system of immigration control that worked unfairly and discriminately against someone purely because of that person's colour. That had been alleged, with the result that the case was examined carefully not only by the head of the immigration department but by my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill (Mr. Wardle), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, who now handles such matters and who took a close interest in the affair. I also considered it, to a slightly lesser extent; I kept in touch with my hon. Friend.

We were entirely satisfied with the explanation that was given. If it is still contested, it will be open to the applicant to appeal. It is not helpful, however, to try to pour abuse on the whole system, relying on partial newspaper stories supplied by a journalist who listens to what the complainant says, but is not prepared to listen to explanations. We shall present legislation that will be fair to the genuine applicant—fair to everyone, indeed—but the system will be governed by the rule of law. We shall seek to get rid of the delays, the legalisms and some of the wilder allegations.

The primary-purpose rule is subject to litigation at present, as the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has said. I know that he has always felt strongly about the issue, but I do not agree with what he said about the logic of the case. He challenged me to produce a logical justification. In my opinion, arguments about whether marriages are bogus are, to an extent, immaterial. It is not for me, or for any other Minister in this or any other Government, to express views about whether arranged marriages are a good or a bad thing; we all have our views on that, but it is not what lies behind the rule. People are

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free to marry for whatever reason they choose. In my experience, people have married for a variety of reasons, not all of which have struck me as frightfully good—but that is the ultimate civil liberty, which is available to everyone regardless of background.

It is perfectly logical for a country or a Parliament to object if two people from different countries marry and the main reason for the marriage—there may, of course, be others—has nothing to do with romantic or family attachment. If the marriage is intended to enable a man who otherwise would not be allowed to live here to enter the country for that purpose, surely there is nothing illogical in telling that man, "Of course you are free to marry, but that does not necessarily allow you to get around immigration controls that should apply to you."

We can argue about individual cases. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, for instance, has said that he knows of cases in which the wrong decision was made. The argument, however, does not apply only to Indian men and arranged marriages; there are also the so-called mail-order brides, south-east Asian women who marry Englishmen. I do not consider it illogical to introduce a rule that allows people to enter into such marriages if they wish to do so, but makes it clear that it is not necessarily just for immigration rules to be "collapsed" so that someone whose principal purpose in marrying is to get around the immigration rules can gain admission. We shall wait to find out what the litigation produces, but I do not share the right hon. Gentleman's strong views in this regard.

Mr. Hattersley: I assure the Home Secretary that there is no disagreement between us on one point. Anyone who marries simply in order to get into this country does not qualify for entry; the logical debate concerns how it is decided what the reason for the marriage was. What I have asked the Home Secretary to defend, in logic, is a system that allows one human being to judge the mind of another on wholly subjective evidence—not on the evidence presented to him, as I think the Minister is now pointing out, but on his own subjective judgment.

As the Home Secretary clearly wishes to dispute such points of logic, will he explain the justice, as well as the rationality, of an immigration service that allows a Frenchwoman living in this country to bring in her Madagascan husband, but does not allow an Englishwoman living in this country to bring in her Pakistani husband? How can the right hon. and learned Gentleman possibly justify that?

Mr. Clarke: Let me deal with the first question. *[Interruption.]* The second is an anomaly—the first is easier to deal with—and does not derive from our rules.

I thought that the right hon. Gentleman was close to agreeing with me. We are discussing whether a person has an overwhelming human right to come here—I paraphrase slightly, but this is not a court of law—if his main reason for marrying is to get around the immigration rules. There may be subsidiary reasons, but the main reason—they would not have married except for the fact—is that one wanted to remain here. That is the logical argument for the rules. The right hon. Gentleman was saying that there was no logical argument, and then he asked, "How do you judge that without trying to get into somebody's mind?" Throughout the system of law and administration, trying on the evidence to judge somebody else's state of mind frequently has to be subjective.

For example, let us consider the case of someone who says that he is coming here as a visitor. He may have some other reason for coming here. A person who asserts that he is coming here as a visitor is sometimes refused because, on the evidence available and in all the circumstances, the immigration officer says, "No. This chap may be coming here partly because he wants to visit English cathedrals or partly because he wants to visit his sick mother, but his main reason is that he does not want to go back when he is finished doing those things. He wishes to come here and settle."

Nobody has ever argued that cases such as that should be refused. All such cases involve difficult judgments about what is someone's intention, in all the circumstances, not just what they say that their intentions are. That is why it is a sensitive matter in which we have to construct careful legislation and have an appeals system, which is what we should be talking about.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I have already given way far more often on immigration and the primary-purpose rule than I said I would.

Going back to the first and most difficult issue, many points were raised. I reassert that, in the other matters to which I shall refer and steadily work through, my main aim in respect of race relations will be to build upon—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about the second point?"] I obviously look forward to an enlivening and——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Hon. Members know quite well that, if a Minister does not give way, hon. Members must resume their seat.

Mr. Clarke: I look forward to further debates on immigration. They will obviously be lively, but they make progress. In the past half hour, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has conceded that there is logic in the policy behind the primary-purpose rule, and he has at least stepped back to his second point—his lesser point, in my opinion—which is on the difficulties of applying it. We shall return to that matter in due course. We have agreed that the aim in this aspect of race relations is to build upon, help to strengthen further——

Mr. Madden: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It may assist you and the House to know that our concern is that the Home Secretary has failed to answer the second part of a two-part question asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). Will the Home Secretary now deal with the matter of a British woman seeking——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair cannot judge how satisfactory a Minister's answers might be, otherwise our proceedings would be endless.

Mr. Clarke: Given that, on the first point, the Opposition have been bowled middle stump, they seem to be extremely anxious to try to scratch around for another one which they know perfectly well derives from Community law and not from British law. I do not think

that most of the Opposition would wish to fall in line with French or Community practice in many of those race relations matters. They know perfectly well that British race relations law—British immigration law, I dare say—is superior in almost all respects to that on the continent.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Clarke: No; I must move on.

Mr. Turner *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: No; I am moving on. The hon. Gentleman may ask me a question some other time, but I am moving on.

Mr. Turner: Will the Home Secretary please give way?

Mr. Clarke: On the question that was——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Secretary of State, would you resume your seat while I am standing, please? I have very recently made the point that if a Minister, or indeed any other hon. Member who has the floor, does not give way, it is his or her right so to do.

Mr. Clarke: I apologise for not sitting down, Madam Deputy Speaker. Your rising is the only thing that gets the hon. Member for Wolverhampon, South-East (Mr. Turner) to sit down.

The question of Muslim schools was also raised. It is simply not the case that education policy in any way discriminates against Muslim schools—of course it does not. I shall explain exactly what the position is. Voluntary-aided schools exist for denominational, confessional education. It is open to anyone who has such a school to maintain it and to anyone to apply to open a new one. In my opinion—I am sure that my opinion is indistinguishable from that of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and from that of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), who speaks on education for the Opposition—it is right that we should defend the right of parents who wish to have access to denominational education, if it can be provided, be they Roman Catholic, Anglican, Jewish, Muslim or of any other religious denomination. That is applied throughout Britain, regardless of religious confession.

It is difficult to open a new voluntary-aided school because of the rules which are applied to all such schools. There have been two Muslim applications in recent years. One was withdrawn. The only one that was turned down was the Islamia school in Brent in north London. It was turned down by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, who was Secretary of State for Education and Science before me. The criterion applied to that school were exactly the same as those applied to any other school.

The first criteria is whether the school will follow the national curriculum. We must be candid. That is a question that has to be asked in a fair number of the Muslim applications. Although it does not apply to the Brent school, private Muslim schools have sailed near to teaching the female pupils domestic science, Koranic studies and not a lot of other things which should be taught under the national curriculum. It is not discriminatory to insist that the national curriculum should be applied.

Obviously, the usual judgments are made about whether the school is well run, but the key criterion is whether there is a demand for places in the education authority. For schools of all denominations it has been the practice of the Department of Education for many years to turn down applications for new school places, which would cause an extra burden on public funds and create extra school places, in boroughs or counties where there is already a surplus, which in some cases the local authority is trying to tackle. That is where the Islamia school went down. I will not say any more about it, because it is subject to litigation. I have missed it because the decision was taken before my time and the matter has been before the courts ever since. I have no doubt that my successor is contemplating the advice of the judges to look at the matter again.

I know for a fact that the decision of my predecessor was not based on any rule which he would not apply to a Jewish, Catholic or Anglican school. We are talking about the relevance of the surplus places argument in the application for the Islamia school.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: I will give way on schools. Then I shall move on to some of the other matters raised by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook.

Mr. Boateng: The Secretary of State outlined the vacant places criterion and said that Muslim schools or schools of any other denomination are permitted to open only where there are no vacant places. Does that same criterion apply to the imposition of city technology colleges on local education authorities? If not, why not?

Mr. Clarke: That is pure education policy. It has nothing to do with ethnic minority policy. It applies because CTCs—*[Interruption.]* I will argue about city technology colleges if it is in order to do so. The criterion is applied because city technology colleges are a valuable acquisition of educational provision in areas, some of which are governed by Labour authorities, where the present level of provision is fairly appalling. CTCs take large numbers of ethnic minority pupils.

To take an obvious example, in Nottingham the CTC is providing educational opportunities to people from deprived parts of that city and especially from ethnic minority families who would not have had those opportunities if the policy of the local Labour council to resist the opening of that CTC had been successful. To that extent, CTCs are relevant to this debate.

It is wrong and positively unhelpful to good race relations for anyone to imply for political reasons, as a few did at the last election, that decisions on Muslim schools are taken according to some criteria which discriminate against Muslims. I gave the go-ahead to a new Jewish voluntary-aided school in north-east London shortly before the election.

Mr. Vaz: Ah.

Mr. Clarke: I will not comment on that "Ah" from the hon. Gentleman. We take the same view with Jews as with Muslims or Christians.

Mr. Vaz: No.

Mr. Clarke: Yes, we do. Our discussions on that school were about surplus places in that part of London. A great argument broke out. The applicants had to satisfy me that the school would not provide surplus places before the Jewish school was allowed to go ahead. That remains the rule. Undoubtedly, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education is reflecting on it in his new departmental responsibility in the light of what the judges had to say about the Brent case.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook rightly raised the issue of jobs, which I believe is at the core of the debate. Discrimination in job opportunities is the greatest handicap that can fall on any community. It can have wider consequences. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that the Government, both under the former Prime Minister and certainly under the present Prime Minister, believe in extending the fullest opportunity equally to every section of the community. We want to open to people from every background equal opportunity to enter any part of the labour market and go right to the top.

I do not intend to spend too long on the arguments about finance, but that is one part of the Opposition motion which I challenge.

Mr. Jimmy Boyce (Rotherham): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: No. I must get on.

We undoubtedly spend a disproportionate amount of public finance on those parts of urban areas where the ethnic minorities are most strongly concentrated. A lot of that money goes to seeking to redress inequalities of opportunity. It goes further than that. I cannot understand the suggestion in the right hon. Gentleman's motion that ethnic minorities do not receive a fair share of resources. I do not object to spending a slightly disproportionate share of resources in areas where the ethnic minorities tend to be concentrated.

Apparently the right hon. Gentleman's basis for saying that the ethnic minorities receive less than their fair share of resources is the changes in local government finance. I strongly disagree. I find the details of local government finance one of the more tedious subjects to debate in the House, but I have to do it on occasions. However, his arguments on local government finance cannot be used on that limb.

All our inner-city policies, which he dismissed as "specific grants", lead to huge sums of public money going to inner city areas, expressly to redress the disadvantages that we are discussing. I was involved in launching the action for cities programme a few years ago. I do not apologise for what the right hon. Gentleman called razzamatazz. We were trying to draw to the attention of the people intended to benefit from the programme what was available to them. We reckon that we have spent about £10 billion across Government Departments on urban and inner-city policies since 1985-86.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment calculates that across Departments expenditure now runs at £4 billion a year on projects of one sort or another. I helped to set up the task forces. We also have the much bigger city action teams. My Department has set up the safer cities programme and there are other initiatives to which I shall refer. We are spending a great deal on redressing the disadvantages.

To increase job opportunities we need information to identify the problems. Ethnic monitoring has been referred to. I most certainly approve of ethnic monitoring as a means of taking action on discrimination and, indeed, as part of any positive employment policy which a good employer should follow.

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: When I have finished this part of my speech on ethnic monitoring.

The Government have advocated ethnic monitoring to major employers through the Department of Employment as good practice for many years. I introduced ethnic monitoring into the collection of the unemployment statistics when I was at the Department of Employment in order to provide the statistics which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook cited. I am glad that he approves of it because at the time there was tremendous opposition from black radical groups who thought that it was a racist measure to count the ethnic origin of the unemployed. We got through all that and people now realise that ethnic monitoring is a positive weapon. It does not give any answers. It does not necessarily say that discrimination is taking place or that disadvantage is suffered. But it causes people to ask the questions once one has monitored the incidence of people from ethnic minorities in different categories. I am in favour of it. Indeed, I introduced it into the Department of Employment and into the national health service. We continue to urge it.

We disagree with the Opposition on the contract compliance which some Labour local authorities wish to write into their municipal contracts, in line with American experience. One could get into a technical debate. I have been involved in putting local labour clauses into inner city projects such as in Handsworth in the city of Birmingham of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. But I am not persuaded of the value of the American model of contract compliance. Undoubtedly the Commission for Racial Equality will come back later this year and make proposals. It is interested in the issue. I do not believe that the American experience is all one way. Most hon. Members will support what the right hon. Member and I have just said about the value of ethnic monitoring as a tool to ensure that one does not inadvertently discriminate and to ensure that one knows where one is with one's work force.

It would be a more difficult and dangerous course to go beyond that and to make it a legal requirement to have a target number of people from ethnic backgrounds in the work force. Indeed, that could backfire, contrary to the intentions of those who propose it, because it is damaging to a company's race relations if the white work force believe that the black work force is only there because the law has required their admittance, regardless of suitability for the job, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) said in her intervention. That is why I am not in favour of such contract compliance and the CRE will have to argue strongly to move the Government in that direction.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): My right hon. and learned Friend will recall that the Select Committee on Home Affairs recommended ethnic monitoring in the civil service, and that has been carried out to good effect. Equally, the Select Committee's study of the American

experience some years ago confirmed that, broadly speaking, their compliance measures did not work and that there was substantial and wilful evasion. That is why we did not recommend it for this country.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend because his Select Committee is a respected cross-party committee. I also studied the situation in the United States again and came to the same conclusion. Some Labour councils——

Mr. Simpson: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for allowing me to intervene and I am pleased to hear of his support for ethnic monitoring. Would he recommend it to the district authority that he represents? Can he explain to the House the experience of the black housing association which sought to tackle inner city inequalities by acquiring properties in his constituency? The leader of the housing committee there went on record as saying that he was opposed to the "dumping of dross" in his area. As a result of his interventions and the reallocation of nomination rights to the district housing authority—without ethnic monitoring—none of the families allocated to those properties by the council were black.

Mr. Clarke: That matter is more suitable for an Adjournment debate, or for Nottingham city council or Rushcliffe borough council. The hon. Gentleman knows that I totally disagree with everything that he has just said. It is true that a Nottingham housing association acquired property in my constituency without notifying the local authority that it proposed to do so. The association failed to follow any housing corporation guidelines on how to behave in such a situation. As everyone with experience of inner cities or race relations policy knows, some organisations in the field—in this case it was a black housing association—simply accuse all critics of racialism when the organisation's incompetence, discourtesy and refusal to provide agreements is pointed out. I am glad to say that the matter was to some extent sorted out by the Housing Corporation, but we should not go further into our local battles.

I shall move on to the subject of jobs and the position of ethnic minorities from top to bottom in the employment market. We need to create a society that aims for equality and opportunity. Whether by monitoring or by some other means, we need to consider the opportunities for people to be appointed to influential posts at the top of society.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: No, I shall not.

I agree that our main aim must be to help to strengthen the positive contribution of ethnic minorities to British society, which is already important in business, the professions and many other walks of life. I welcome it and I am keen that that positive contribution should be increased. If we are to strengthen the position of ethnic minorities in this country, it is important for members of minorities to emerge in leading roles in private industry, public service and the professions.

Mr. Trimble *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall not give way again.

There is a large and successful Asian entrepreneurial and professional middle class. I have watched their emergence in the constituency of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. We need a stronger black middle class, with more black business and professional people whom able black youngsters could identify with and seek to emulate. I am glad to say that more influential public bodies are including increasing numbers of ethnic minority members. We must increase those numbers, not as a token gesture but because of the personal contribution that the people appointed can make.

The number of appointments of justices from the ethnic minority communities has exceeded their proportion in the population age groups from which appointments are usually made, especially in recent years. I am glad to be able to say that the first magistrate of Chinese origin in this country was recently appointed in my constituency.

Many people from all minorities are rising in the professions. We welcome the few Members of Parliament from ethnic minorities, but we are agreed that there are not enough; all parties want their numbers to increase. Therefore, we must seek to encourage more able members of the ethnic minorities to climb to the top of the ladder, and I am sure that that will happen in time.

Mr. Trimble: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall not give way. I have given way far too often already, but I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for not having given way to an Ulster Member.

Our aim must eventually be to achieve a position where we cease to comment on the numbers of people from ethnic minorities in leading roles in society because their presence is taken for granted and their influence is assured. Race has no real relevance to someone's position in the sort of society that we wish to be.

We must look again at business and encourage the talent and entrepreneurial flair that exists within ethnic minority businesses, which must be allowed into the mainstream of the economy and encouraged to improve their access to business development services. Small businesses are vital to the growth of our economy and minority-led and other local enterprise agencies, funded under the Home Office ethnic minority business initiative, have shown that there is demand from the expanding ethnic minority business base for support services that acknowledge and are sensitive to their specific needs.

Mr. Trimble: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall not give way. The ethnic minority business programme, which is not strong in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, is continuing. We must remove the obstacles which can prevent minority businesses from moving into the mainstream of commercial life.

Also, we must continue to improve the targeting of other areas of public expenditure, aimed at addressing the special needs of people from ethnic minorities. That is important, given the large sums of money being spent. Large sums of public money are available, but ill-directed good intentions can pour some of it down the drain. Anyone involved in inner city programmes has seen that happen occasionally. I am not saying that that happens under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966, but we are studying targeting in that area and shall continue to do so. Under section 11, £129 million will be made available to local authorities in 1992-93. That is not small money in such an area. We have already made progress in

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revising the criteria for section 11 grants so that work is targeted and expenditure gives value for money. I am studying future policy on the better use of that money.

We should find an opportunity at some time—I do not know when—to study the wording of section 11, which gets in the way of many things that people want. We all know that it is confined to local government staff and to the new Commonwealth. One cannot help Vietnamese minorities, for example. One day I hope to have the opportunity to do something about that.

Good progress has been made in that area and in many others, but I am sure that barriers remain to full opportunity for people from ethnic minorities and to a fully integrated society. The most obvious and obnoxious barrier is racial discrimination, and the Government remain committed to eliminating its evils. We demonstrate our commitment by support of the law, and shall continue to do so. Our race relations laws are the most comprehensive in Europe. I do not think that it is xenophobic to say that they are undoubtedly the best in the European Community. As a Government, we work closely with the Commission for Racial Equality in enforcing the law and support it in all its work.

We have done a great deal of work in combating racially targeted crime. Detailed guidance has been issued to the police and other agencies following the initiative of the inter-departmental racial attacks group. Police forces are urged to give priority to incidents of racially motivated crime. I believe that the big increase in the number of incidents reported to the police shows an increased confidence in the ability of the police to respond to those reports. Undoubtedly, we have to continue to attack such crime with vigour.

We must also make sure that the community consultation engaged in by the police, which they now perform statutorily, extends to proper consultation with all those groups that it is most difficult to get involved, in particular young people but also people from the ethnic minorities with whom consultation is most important to improve the quality of police work. As I hope that everybody knows, we have been working extremely hard in support of the police authorities to improve recruitment from ethnic minorities. We still have a considerable way to go, but in the past year or two in particular there has been considerable activity to support the recruitment of ethnic minorities. I am glad to say that there are now more than 1,500 officers from the ethnic minorities in place, and we shall take every action that we can to ensure an increase in the number of good men and women from the ethnic minorities who enter the police service.

I know that people are concerned about racial discrimination in the criminal justice system. A great deal of attention has been paid to the disproportionate number of black and ethnic minority people in prison, the disproportionate number who appear to be prosecuted rather than cautioned, and the disproportionately low numbers in place in the professions and in the administration of the courts. I believe that those statistics do not demonstrate racial bias in the system of administration of justice. Through most of the criminal justice system, there is a much higher proportion of people who are positively hostile to the idea of racial discrimination than there is among the general population.

There is no point in being complacent. I agree that many sensible people look at the statistics and are concerned that there appears to be discrimination. Therefore, we have done a lot of research. The figures that I could give to the House come out of work in which my Department has been involved, monitoring to ensure that we identify problem areas. This is an area in which I support, among other things, ethnic monitoring of the prison population and of the statistics of those cautioned and prosecuted, and then action to ensure that we do what is necessary.

We shall have more information. Only last year, section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 placed a duty on the Secretary of State to publish regular information concerning the avoidance of discrimination. Those involved in the administration of criminal justice are already under a duty not to discriminate. The publication of information by the Secretary of State is intended to help them to perform this duty effectively. I confirm that the first statistics under section 95 will be published before the end of this year.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I listened with interest to the Home Secretary's comments about the criminal justice system. If I understood him correctly, he said that he is aware of the figures that show that there is a disproportionate number of black people in prison, that they are more likely to have longer sentences and custodial sentences rather than fines, and so on. However, he said that, despite the evidence of the figures and the wonderful work done by the Home Office research department, he did not believe that those figures showed racial discrimination. If they do not demonstrate institutional racism, what do they demonstrate?

Mr. Clarke: They demonstrate a higher level of contact between ethnic minority people and the legal system. There is more than one side to that problem, which the leaders in the ethnic minority communities must address with the rest of us. I can think of no clear explanation for why the statistics show that a higher proportion of people from the ethnic minorities elect, of their own free will, to go to the Crown court for trial and that a higher proportion of people from the ethnic minorities plead not guilty when they get to court. All these factors are being analysed, and we shall have more information about them. It is noticeable, on those partial statistics, that simply coming to the conclusion that this is all racial discrimination is not enough, and that we have to address ourselves to what other constraints can be placed on a population whose behaviour, sometimes among its younger members, brings it into contact with the law.

Mr. Hargreaves: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm the research done by his Department that pinpoints even more closely where, if there is one, the problem may lie in this respect? The statistics show that females from the ethnic minorities are not involved. Predominantly, the problem is with males. It is only fair to the lady Members of the House to say that this problem is mirrored not just here but by research that has been done by a number of us in the United States, Canada and elsewhere to identify that, if there is a problem, it is among males rather than females. It is to that that we must address ourselves.

Mr. Clarke: That is also true of crime in general. It is not exclusively a male preserve, but it is heavily a male activity.

I apologise for the length of time that I have taken, but I have disappointed more Members by refusing to give way to them than I have pleased by acceding to such a request. I have been drawn, by the speech of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and by interventions, into debating a number of subjects that I had not planned to deal with, but that is a good feature of a debate rather than a bad one.

We have not had a debate on this subject for a long time and this debate should help us all to underline the fact that the political system is committed to a good system of race relations. We are committed to action, as well as just speeches, to reduce the amount of racial discrimination and to improve the opportunities for those from ethnic minorities.

We have a better record than almost any other equivalent country in the western world with a large ethnic minority population. Our political system is responding better to the pressures of this kind than, say, the political system in either France or Germany appears to be. There is no room for complacency. Action and attention to what needs to be done must be kept up. Government, society and the ethnic communities themselves must all take their share of the responsibility for working for positive, good community relations. I hope that our amendment and the debate have made it clear that the Government's commitment to racial opportunity and equal opportunity is beyond doubt and that we have a good record in taking positive steps to achieve that.

5.6 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I was glad to hear that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) decided, in what is apparently not his final, but perhaps his penultimate, performance as deputy leader of the Labour party, to choose a subject that is known to be close to his heart, both for constituency reasons and for reasons of principle and of intellectual application, shown over the years, to defending the interests of the ethnic minorities. I am bound to say that I did not expect it to be a bipartisan debate, certainly not as the right hon. Gentleman opened it, and he did not disappoint my expectations on that front.

It is also a happy coincidence that the Home Secretary has been given an opportunity, so early in the lifetime of this Government, to show us the nature of the man when dealing with what is undoubtedly one of the most difficult and sensitive responsibilities that he will discharge as Home Secretary—relations with the ethnic minorities, the prospect for those who have suffered from discrimination and who are least favoured in too many cases because of their ethnic origin. I no more expected the Home Secretary to be partisan in his approach than I expected the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook to be. It is a worthy aspiration for the House to approach these matters in a bipartisan way, for other countries that have not done so —the Home Secretary spoke, appropriately, of the experience of France and Germany—have found it extremely damaging to race relations.

The Home Secretary's predecessor in that great office of state set an example that I hope that he will not follow. Most particularly, during the general election, he gave voice to views about ethnic minorities and immigration that were plainly designed to support the most atavistic impulses in this country and to encourage the belief that only one party would prevent a flood tide of immigrants of black and other colours sweeping across the country.

It was a discreditable feature of the general election and it cannot go unremarked in this debate, which follows so hard upon its heels. It was a discreditable fact that a number of newspapers with wide circulations played closely along with the then Home Secretary in that disgraceful campaign. It was disgraceful because of its intellectual dishonesty and because it completely misrepresented the views of the official Labour party and the Liberal Democrats. However, it was also disgraceful because it did nothing to still the anxieties—most of them misplaced—of those in areas where there is a sense that communities are being taken over by people of a different cultural background from that long-established in those communities.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) is not in the Chamber, so I feel constrained to rise to his defence. I have been checking my recollections with the Minister of State, Home Office and my Parliamentary Private Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), and we cannot remember the outrageous remarks that my right hon. Friend was supposed to have made during the election. Before history is rewritten, it is my clear recollection that the Asylum Bill hardly featured in the election campaign from beginning to end, and nor did the issues of immigration and race relations.

Mr. Maclennan: I do not expect that the right hon. and learned Gentleman paid very close attention to what the then Home Secretary said during the election campaign. Let me quote the former Home Secretary. On 5 April, he spoke of the dramatic rise in the vote for the fascist Die Republikaner party in Germany. He said that it was due to one issue:

> "That issue was the flood of migrants and would-be asylum seekers whose continuing numbers have aroused public concern. I have warned for many months about this rising tide."

He also spoke of fascists marching in Europe and gave a terrible warning about similar matters. In the context of the headlines that were appearing in many of the newspapers with larger circulations, it is clear from the former Home Secretary's speech, made four days before the election, that he does not view such matters in the same way as, I suspect, the right hon. and learned Gentleman would prefer. I believe that the new Home Secretary is more sensitive about those matters, and that he is a man of rather better taste than his predecessor. His defence of his right hon. Friend is in stark contrast to the stab in the back just delivered by the former Home Secretary to his former Cabinet colleagues on the issue of Maastricht. However, that is not a subject for this debate.

I am also glad that the Home Secretary reaffirmed that there is broad agreement in the House about the principle, at least, of how we should seek to govern a multiracial society. He focused his comments on ways and means. It is inevitable that there will be differences about the ways and means of ensuring that we do not create a society that

[Mr. Maclennan]

encourages or allows discrimination to take place. If we are able to minimise those differences, we will perform a great service.

I agree with the Home Secretary that the heart of the debate should be about employment. From the figures that he and his Department, in one of its incarnations, produced on employment, we can see what a stark disadvantage it appears to be to belong to an ethnic minority if one is seeking to get ahead. It is not a matter only of inner-city deprivation, although it is right to mention what is being done about that. Discrimination also applies to those people who have the qualifications, but who are not preferred for jobs for which they are suitable. The figures show that twice as many people from ethnic minorities who have attained higher education are unemployed as those from the ethnic majority. That difference requires the consideration of ways and means.

Employment opportunity is not necessarily a matter of public expenditure. If the Home Secretary rejects the contract-compliance suggestions put forward in a number of circles—not only by the official Opposition—it is incumbent upon him to say how he would hope to see changes come about. He spoke convincingly and sincerely about his wish to see important positions in society held by those from ethnic minorities. No doubt he had in mind appointments such as judges or members of quangos. Many of those appointments may be made by members of the Government, and even his Department has in its hand a substantial element of patronage. I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will use it positively to achieve the ends he outlined to ensure that change takes place.

I was interested in what the Home Secretary said about the criminal justice system and his belief, repeated in his response to an intervention from the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott), that the figures do not suggest that racial discrimination exists within the system. I acknowledge that the requirement of the law, which he says he supports, as outlined in section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, is to produce statistical information which may help us to make up our minds on that matter. That requirement has not been on the statute book for very long and it would be difficult for any of us, in the present circumstances, to assert a contrary proposition to that of the Home Secretary. However, I hope that he will have an open mind and that he will not be too firm in his view that there is no evidence of racial discrimination within the criminal justice system.

Many people who have been involved in that system for many years and who have not had the benefit of the statistics that will be forthcoming from his Department feel that racial discrimination exists. There have been ugly incidents—they are well-known in some policing circles—that were clearly racial. I know that the picture is patchy and that some police forces have done a great deal to root out racially-motivated attacks. However, in some areas such attacks are too common, and the figures show that the number is increasing. It is for that reason that the Liberal Democrats have suggested that there should be a specially dedicated squad of policemen to tackle the problem in those areas where it is perceived to be a serious threat.

The monitoring to be undertaken by the Home Office will be highly important. I am glad that the production of such figures is to be a matter of law, but what the Home Secretary chooses to publish will be a matter for him. We could, therefore, have rather more or less informative figures, depending upon the way in which he approaches the matter. In the spirit of open government, which we have been promised by the Prime Minister, I hope that the Home Secretary will tell us as soon as possible, not necessarily the results of the monitoring, but exactly what will be monitored, so that we can evaluate, even now, whether the process is going along on the right lines.

There are some other matters that I wish to raise briefly in my short speech—it must be short because this is a short debate. There is serious concern about housing for ethnic minorities in some parts of the country. The homeless are disproportionately drawn from ethnic minority communities. In the wind-up speech, will the Minister of State tell us how he believes that that problem can best be tackled?

I do not disagree with the Home Secretary's comments on education. I share his philosophical view, and that of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, that there should be freedom of choice in education. Indeed, the issue is governed by the European Convention on Human Rights. While we can differ on what is desirable for this country, there is a broadly bipartisan view about that.

I should comment on the attack on my party made by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook when he referred to Tower Hamlets. He knows my political history and is aware that I have never allowed party to stand in the way of judgment about the rights and wrongs of an issue, to the point at which I was driven to leave the Labour party, of which he is a member. So I am not embarrassed by the question he asked, although he thought that I might be. I am exceedingly unhappy about what happened in that case. That local authority suffered appalling pressures, imposed on it by the very policies to which the right hon. Gentleman referred in respect of local government finance.

Mr. Hattersley: If I misjudged the hon. Gentleman's willingness to make that honourable statement, I hope that he will forgive me. I plead in mitigation the fact that since, on a local government results programme, the leader of his party refused to condemn what happened, I assumed that he would do the same.

Mr. Maclennan: The right hon. Gentleman knows that I am my own man. I am not in any way criticising what I have not heard. My party is seeking to incorporate into the law of the land the European Convention on Human Rights—a move which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has steadfastly resisted—and, now, a wider Bill of Rights which would specifically and explicitly protect ethnic minority citizens from discrimination by public authorities, including local authorities.

I hope that, as the right hon. Gentleman retires from his current responsibilities, he will feel rather more supportive of those objectives, which are designed to eliminate practices by local authorities of which he disapproves. It is no good taking a holier-than-thou attitude to local authorities which are under massive pressure because of central Government finance policy without providing the means to remedy matters.

I hope that the Home Secretary will provide hon. Members with opportunities in Government time to

discuss issues relating to immigration. It is right that this debate should not focus on that subject, as we are likely to have a debate in the next six months on the question of asylum. I was interested to learn that the Home Secretary is looking not just at the urgency of the case for asylum seekers' claims being considered more expeditiously—despite a substantial drop in the number of asylum seekers in the first quarter of this year—but that there appears to be a backlog of about 60,000 claims in his Department, despite the increase in expenditure this year to about £10 million.

I am glad that the right hon. and learned Gentleman proposes to review such matters as the primary-purpose rule. I do not necessarily expect him to come up with a different answer, but the fact that he is at least proposing to review it is pleasing. I hope that, in the process of that review, he will recognise the great advantage there would be in calling to his office not only those with statutory responsibilities for race relations—I am sure that he will do that in any case—but those with experience of race matters in their constituencies. They should include hon. Members with such experience in all parts of the House.

If we could come up with a policy for immigration which commanded respect and agreement across the Floor, that would prove an immensely valuable prize. It would take the issue out of future general elections, bearing in mind the ugly way in which it surfaced during the last election, and would strengthen the Government's stated objectives of bringing about greater harmony in such matters. Will the Home Secretary have cross-party discussions and treat the issue in an exceptional way, remembering that it is an exceptional problem?

I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will consider the whole question of imprisonment. The prison system is under immense pressure. There are many more black and ethnic minority inmates than there are proportionately from other communities. It is difficult to say why that should be, and perhaps the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 will shed some light on the matter. I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will not simply rely on the easy nostrum that people get into trouble because they are bad. There is much more to the problem. He should look again at the sentencing policy of the courts. The issue has baffled successive Secretaries of State. While it may not be an easy matter, he should come to terms with it. The ethnic minorities will greatly benefit if he can come up with some answers.

Despite what the right hon. and learned Gentleman said about the problems in Germany, I commend to him the sentencing policies being pursued there by a Government who, in relation to sentencing, are not totally dissimilar in political complexion to Her Majesty's Government. There, substantial reductions in sentences do not appear to have led to an increase in offending or in recidivism. Such an exercise might repay study and, in the process, improve race relations.

5.27 pm

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): I am grateful for this opportunity to address the House for the first time. In doing so, I confess that I am somewhat nervous lest I follow the fate of one of my predecessors, Benjamin Disraeli, a man whose literary talents I admire, indeed envy, but whose maiden speech proved one of the disasters of parliamentary performance. A contemporary describing that event summed it up by saying that Disraeli "began with fluid assurance, speedily degenerating into ludicrous absurdity and being at last put down with inextinguishable shouts of laughter."

I have the honour to represent the constituency of Aylesbury. It stretches from the Hertfordshire border of Buckinghamshire near Aston Clinton, down through the Chiltern Hills and the edge of the Vale of Aylesbury to the town of Stokenchurch and the village of Ibstone, on either side of the M40 motorway.

We have in the constituency such great institutions as Chequers, Stoke Mandeville hospital and, perhaps dear to the hearts of many English men and women, our national home of rest for horses. About half the population of my constituency lives in Aylesbury town, formerly a small, rather quaint market town but now a fast-growing business, commercial and industrial centre, as well as the county town of Buckinghamshire. The remaining half of my constituents live in smaller towns such as Wendover, Princess Risborough and Great Missenden, as well as in many smaller villages and hamlets which I shall not name individually.

It is an awesome experience to follow a distinguished line of parliamentarians who have represented, not just in recent years but over the centuries, the boroughs of Aylesbury and Wendover and the county of Buckinghamshire. The most illustrious was John Hampden, whose statue stands to this day in Aylesbury marketplace and whose patriotism, championship of liberty and independence of spirit in the face of the Government of his day are still remembered and honoured by my constituents.

At the other end of the scale, perhaps the most notorious representative of Aylesbury was John Wilkes in the 18th century. His house stands nigh St. Mary's church in the centre of the town. He was an enthusiastic member of the Hell Fire club and was expelled from the House of Commons almost as many times as he was elected to it. His political and public career was summed up by Edward Gibbon, who said that Wilkes was

"A thorough profligate in principle as in practice . . .His life stained with every vice and his conversation full of blasphemy and bawdy."

Recent examples may give a happier precedent on which to draw for my own hopes of representing my constituency.

Senior members of this House will remember the service of Sir Spencer Summers, the hon. Member for Aylesbury until 1970. It would be fair to refer in passing to my constituents in Prestwood and Great Missenden who were represented for a time by Sir Ian—now Lord—Gilmour and my constituents of Risborough and Stokenchurch, who still remember with great affection the time when they were represented by the late Sir John Hall.

I pay special tribute to my immediate predecessor, Sir Timothy Raison, who represented Aylesbury with great distinction and dedication from 1970 until the recent general election. Whether as a Minister or a Back Bencher, Tim Raison tried to put principle and his constituency first. As the candidate and now the Member of Parliament going around Aylesbury, I find it striking how men and women of all political persuasions and of none speak of Tim Raison with affection and great respect. If, in my time in the House, I can win for myself a fraction of the reputation that he earned over 20 years, I shall consider myself fortunate.

[Mr. David Lidington]

This debate is an apposite subject on which to make a maiden speech, partly because my immediate predecessor was greatly interested in, and concerned about, those important issues, but also because roughly 5 per cent. of my constituents come from the various ethnic minorities. Issues of race and community relations concern not only inner cities and great conurbations but many small and medium sized towns.

I am glad to say that, in general, race relations in Aylesbury are extremely good, due to two facts. First, the majority of our citizens genuinely recognise—perhaps as the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) wishes to see more generally in this country—that the various ethnic minorities in our town have much to offer and contribute to our community. Secondly, that feeling is reciprocated by the fact that the minorities wish not to lock themselves away in little ghettos but rather, while cherishing their traditions and customs, to play an important and increasing part in the economic, cultural and commercial life of their town and country. That is a fruitful example for other areas to follow in seeking to create good race and community relations.

The principle of which I have spoken can be seen at work in the organisation in Aylesbury. Within the Aylesbury Council for Racial Equality, representatives of all the major political parties work hard together in support of a common aim. It can be seen when visiting our newly opened multicultural centre, built in the heart of Aylesbury and opened by Tim Raison earlier this year. The building acts both as a home for the ethnic minorities—where they can celebrate their traditions and festivals—and as a place that can act as a showcase where they can welcome representatives from the majority community in the town and explain to them why those traditions are important and why they help to enrich the lives of everybody living in Aylesbury.

As I wish to leave plenty of time for others to contribute to the debate, I shall simply touch on two subjects mentioned by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. They are important if we are to secure good race relations in the future. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) mentioned the first of those two subjects—racial attacks. We have relatively few such problems in Aylesbury, but last year I was made aware of the shock and fear caused by what may seem a relatively minor crime—acts of criminal damage committed against Aylesbury mosque, instigated and encouraged by members of the self-styled British National party. No hon. Member would wish to excuse or explain such action. I discovered at first hand what even the breaking of a window and daubing graffiti meant in terms of that minority community's fear. Their status and acceptance as citizens of Aylesbury was under threat. I urge my right hon. and learned Friend to press the police constantly to ensure that they give adequate priority to the detection of offenders who perpetrate racial attacks. Although I know that power over court sentences is not in his hands, I hope that he will consult my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor and use the opportunity of meetings with the magistracy to ask that deterrents and exemplary sentences be imposed when such culprits are brought to trial and convicted.

My second point concerns the teaching of English in schools. No child or adult who lacks a firm grasp of the English language, both written and spoken, will be able to grasp the opportunities that we are trying to make available to them. I welcomed what my right hon. and learned Friend had to say today about the greater targeting of section 11 grants and the review that is under way to see whether the scope of those grants and how they are made available can be improved. However, to my knowledge, a review of section 11 grants has been under way in the Home Office for at least three years. Will my right hon. and learned Friend ask his diligent officials to treat that subject with the urgency and importance that it deserves? All hon. Members should consider themselves fortunate that, at least so far, this country has not experienced the lamentable upsurge of racist and neo-fascist sentiment that is now disfiguring political life in many western European countries. It is incumbent on all of us, whatever our party, to ensure that such sentiments, such extreme philosophies and policies, are never accorded any respect or given the opportunity to gain political support in Britain.

Racial problems are difficult to resolve. The challenges are not for the Government alone, but for voluntary societies and individuals—the mainstay of British cultural and social life. The prize that we should seek to gain is great. I wish to help, as far as I am able, to build a society in which any man or woman, whatever his or her colour, racial origin or ethnic background can feel at home in the United Kingdom and has a willing affection and loyalty to the institutions, history and traditions of this nation. I also wish them to feel that their contribution to our mainstream national life is valued and welcomed by others with different traditions.

I know that it is not within the power of any Government to attain such a goal overnight, but I believe that the policies that my right hon. and learned Friend outlined this afternoon will take us closer to that goal. In implementing them, he will have my wholehearted and enthusiastic support.

5.42 pm

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): I congratulate the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on his excellent maiden speech. My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) made some good comments—she said that she could tell that the hon. Gentleman was new to the House. I hope that he continues to make such speeches.

I welcome the debate and congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) on raising the subject. It is long overdue for discussion and is raised in the Chamber once in a blue moon. It is a subject which the Opposition have to put on the agenda, as the Government will not. The Government have no policy on racial discrimination. To correct myself, the Government have one policy: they believe that if they control immigration, everything else will work out. They think that by keeping the numbers down they will ensure that there is not too much trouble in the country. I do not agree, and I believe that the Government are storing up trouble for the future.

The Government's policy appeases racists, but, unfortunately, racists are only appeased for a short period, and are now on the move. Unemployment has caused more racial attacks on black and minority ethnic groups

than any other issue. Racists use unemployment and other such excuses. I urge the Government to come up with positive policies to deal with the problem.

The Government are also storing up resentment among black people due to the treatment that those people receive. Visitors who come to this country from places like Jamaica are treated almost like scum; they are strip searched and abused. We heard today about the case of a black person from America whose experiences here left a lot to be desired.

Mr. Vaz: Does not my hon. Friend think that now is the time for the Government to abolish the rules which they introduced in 1989 and which they term as guidelines for Members of Parliament when making representations on behalf of visitors to this country? I know that he and his constituency officer deal with many cases in which they have to bargain with junior immigration officers at Heathrow and Gatwick so that constituents' friends who want to make visits or even attend funerals may enter. Genuine cases are rejected and people who have spent much money travelling halfway across the world to visit friends and relatives in this country are sent back, even though their cases are genuine.

Mr. Grant: My hon. Friend is right. When I entered Parliament in 1987, as he did, Members of Parliament were able to put a stop to the removal of visitors from this country. The Government moved quickly to outlaw that privilege for Members of Parliament who, as a result, were forced into bargaining with low-level immigration officers to try to get visitors a stay of one or two days while the Members of Parliament sought to contact the Minister responsible. That is most unsatisfactory, and I agree that the Government should abolish that requirement as soon as possible.

Much resentment is being built up among black people due to the treatment of visitors. People are worried that a white British man can go to the Philippines, buy a bride and return to this country without any problem, while a black person—man or woman—has great difficulty entering the country. One reason for that involves the questions asked of people trying to bring spouses into the country.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I do not wish to quarrel with my hon. Friend, but I can assure him that many of my white constituents who have left the country, not to buy a bride in the Philippines or Thailand, but to contract genuine marriages, have had to wait 18 months to two years and have even produced children, before being allowed to enter this country. While my hon. Friend has a strong argument, it is not true to say that white people can walk in and out of this country with brides as they choose. The Government are much too discriminatory, especially when non-white brides are being brought in.

Mr. Grant: I, too, have no wish to quarrel with my hon. Friend, but I have never had to deal with such a case, and I look forward to the day when one comes before me. I have known of many cases affecting black people, but if the Government are also stopping white people from bringing brides or husbands over here, that is also to be deplored.

I am concerned that a number of key issues are causing difficulties for people in black and minority ethnic communities. One such issue is unemployment, which is at its highest in the inner cities where most blacks live. I was surprised to hear the Secretary of State say today that figures are collected in unemployment exchanges on the basis of ethnicity. I have never been able to obtain any figures on the ethnic breakdown of unemployment. However, I have conducted surveys in my constituency, and I know that 60 per cent. of young black people in Tottenham are unemployed and are unlikely to gain employment in the next year or so. Some 300 school leavers who left schools in my constituency last year have been unable to obtain a place on any Government training scheme.

In my constituency, 11,238 people were unemployed in April, a rise of 23·3 per cent. according to Government calculations. That is an increase of 24 per cent. over the past 12 months and of 70 per cent. over the past two years. Tottenham jobcentre has 116 vacancies, which means that 100 people are chasing every job. According to the unemployment unit index, which is much more accurate than Government figures, 15,990 people are unemployed. That is 33·2 per cent. of Tottenham's working population. There has been an increase of 120 per cent. in long-term unemployment in the past two years, but long-term youth unemployment has risen by some 500 per cent. over the same period. Unemployment and what the Government do about it are matters of grave concern to my constituents.

Despite the extremely high unemployment in my constituency, which has the highest unemployment in London and the fourth highest in the country, Haringey council has decided to cut the youth service by 70 per cent. That service tries to ensure that young people have some place to go. There are now only two main youth centres in Tottenham, and the whole of north and south Tottenham are not covered by the service at all. There are no detached youth worker teams and only one detached youth worker in the whole borough. As a result, young people have nowhere to go and concentrate in clusters in the shopping centres. Many young people spend the whole day in betting shops, and fights are taking place between groups of young people on Duckett's common. The groups consist of youths of a particular ethnic background. Asian young people fight Turkish Cypriots, with African and Caribbean youths and so on. That is happening because there is no provision for young people.

Haringey council, like other local authorities, has been threatened with poll-tax capping. Clearly, the Government's refusal properly to fund local authorities in the past few years must be taken into account. However, the local authority is not playing its full part in providing for young people, especially those from black and minority ethnic communities.

Ms. Abbott: Does my hon. Friend agree that, traditionally, the health service has been a large employer of black people and people from ethnic communities, especially in the big cities? Since 1945, black nurses have in some ways been the unsung heroines in the building of the British health service. The drive towards privatisation and trust hospitals means that the job security and job status of many black workers, and especially women, are seriously threatened. If the Government are serious about black employment and about helping ethnic groups, they should look to their own role and that of the health authorities as employers and to the employment role of the trusts.

Mr. Grant: My hon. Friend is entirely correct. In my area, many black auxiliary nurses and porters have recently been dismissed for various reasons, one of which is that some of the services have been privatised. My hon. Friend is right in what she says about cuts in the health service.

Because there is no proper youth provision in my constituency, youths are turning to drug trafficking. Youth workers tell me that crack cocaine is on the increase because of the money that young people can make from trafficking. They engage in that because there is no alternative employment. The youth workers also tell me that there is tension on the streets and that youths are planning a Los Angeles-style riot or disturbance in my area. They say that unless something is done, especially during the summer months, we can expect trouble. I believe the youth workers. We should take action and I appeal to the Government, even at this late stage, to make money available to ensure that young people are off the streets and doing something positive during the summer.

There are also difficulties in education and training. The North London tech has not been responding to applications from the Turkish youth association and the Asian action group in my constituency and no reasons have been given for non-acceptance. One youth worker told me that the youth are Thatcher's children. They are under pressure to drive fast cars and, as a consequence, they are forced to live above their means. As a result, they are driven into the hands of the drug pushers. I hope that we can do something to help young people, especially those in inner cities and those from black minority and ethnic groups.

Much attention has been focused on the Maastricht treaty, but the Single European Act, which comes into force on 1 January, will create problems for people from black and ethnic minority communities. The Act is supposed to allow free movement of people, but we know that, because of racism, people are not being allowed to move freely around Europe. They are being stopped on the borders and on the streets of European cities and asked to produce documents, purely on the basis of the colour of their skin. There is no other reason whatever.

We must look seriously at the way in which racism and fascism have risen in Europe. For example, in Belgium, where there is little or no race legislation, blacks can be excluded from pubs. They cannot live in certain areas in Brussels and people can discriminate against them in a variety of ways. Racial attacks are increasing. When people hear about attacks on refugees and asylum seekers they say that all such people are being attacked in western Europe. But the ones who are being injured and killed are the black ones. That is the difference. A Yugoslav or a Czech can melt into the population in a European country and, unless he is questioned, he can get away with it. However, because of the visibility of colour, racists and fascists can go on a spree and it does not matter whether the victim is a citizen, a migrant or a refugee.

I went to a recent conference in Berlin called by the Immigrants Political Forum in Germany and some of the horror stories told there must be repeated. There were people there from Denmark, Spain and Germany. The Danish representative said that 20 refugee centres had been burnt down in Sweden and that a sniper operating in Denmark is shooting at black people. Recently 15 people have been shot and one has been killed, but there has been no attempt by the police to ensure that people are caught and tried. Bombs have been set off in Copenhagen and in Norway.

Police violence against migrants in Paris is enormous. Gangs of white youths roam the streets looking for black people and coloured people generally to attack. In working-class areas, people with black neighbours were told to shoot them if they acted in any way which their white neighbours considered anti-social.

Spain is the nearest European country to Africa and Africans are being shot as they cross the sea to that country. Bodies riddled with bullets have been washed up on Spain's beaches and the outlook for those who have been admitted as genuine asylum seekers and refugees is grim. No Government provision is made for them, although they are legal asylum seekers. People have to sleep in the park and are often moved on. They have no housing, no money and have to fend for themselves.

It is ironic that in July this year black athletes will be shaking the hand of the President of Spain when they receive their gold medals, while that same person is responsible for the depredations facing black citizens and black asylum-seekers in that country. Black athletes should make some sort of protest, perhaps by boycotting the opening or closing ceremony, to let people know that they disagree with the way in which black people are being treated in Spain. I shall be approaching a number of people asking that some sort of protest be lodged along those lines.

In Portugal, people are working illegally on building sites. Employers are using such people, who are often called clandestines, because they are cheap labour. Many of them are killed and injured because employers do not have to worry about safety measures. Such issues are important and must be looked at.

We were told by the Germans of a situation in a town in Germany called Hoyerswerda. In September last year about 250 migrants were set upon, originally by skinheads, but eventually by almost the entire town. The skinheads attacked one of the refugee hostels and the people had to run up to the roof. They stayed there for three days and they had only the food that they could take with them. One of those involved said:

"We all, Mozambicans and Vietnamese ran into the house and took refuge in the upper floors. The Skins were joy-dancing, uncorking bottles of brandy or gin, drinking shouting 'Foreigners out', 'Germany for Germans' . . . Later on more and more bystanders began arriving on the premises, so that at the end it was all clogged up with people. After 1·5 hours they started pelting our windows with stones. Whenever one of them would hit their target the spectators-bystanders would clap their hands. This meant for us 'Right on, you are dead right now, well done'. And the policemen, 12 of them who were there—did not do anything to arrest the people concerned."

The person went on:

"On the following day it all started again at 3 pm. This time there were also some schoolchildren among the mob, not only skinheads. Children came accompanied by their parents. The parents gave their children stones to throw them at our window panes. As the glasses broke into pieces they began clapping their hands, children and parents. There were only a very few parents, perhaps only four families, who dragged their children out of the riot with the subsequent scolding."

Those involved went on to say that they were bussed into another small town where they were also attacked. The position in Europe must be deplored and the Government must do something about it.

From 1 July the Government will hold the presidency of the European Community. Some time ago I asked the Foreign Secretary whether the Government would ensure that race equality legislation was brought into the treaty of Rome and discussed within the European Commission. He said that there was no competence to deal with race equality in the treaty of Rome.

Now that Maastricht seems to have been done away with—I welcome that—and I heard the Prime Minister talking about intergovernmental co-operation and taking a different road, there is no impediment to him raising this issue with other Governments. We need racial equality legislation throughout Europe so that those who travel through or visit Europe, whether on business or whatever, can do so without discrimination and without the stigma attached to being a person of colour.

I hope that when the Minister replies he will talk about that aspect, because this is a unique opportunity for Britain to act. The Government always claim that we are at the top of race equality legislation. Let us do something about it and ensure that the legislation that we claim is so great is duplicated throughout Europe.

Mr. Trimble: The hon. Gentleman is talking about race relations legislation that operates in Great Britain. I am sure that he is aware that that legislation does not apply to all United Kingdom citizens. Does he agree that that is an omission and that the human rights of even very small minorities should be protected? Does he support the extension of race relations legislation to all parts of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Grant: I am being treated kindly this evening. I have agreed with the points of all those who have intervened. The area represented by the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) certainly has a clear need for such legislation. As a matter of fact, Haringey council accepted that Irish people were also a minority ethnic group in Britain and that view has played a part in the local legislation that we have passed. I agree that the legislation should be extended throughout Britain.

Over the past few months we have seen the rise of political racism. A number of parties of the right have come forward. There is the Republikaner party in Germany with its leader Schöenhuber and there is the MSI in Italy. There is the Vlams Blok party in Belgium, which is opposed not only to foreigners but to French being spoken. It wants Flemish to be the language spoken in Belgium. There is opposition in Belgium and young people have formed a counter organisation which they call the Blokbusters. It hopes to start an arm of that organisation in Britain and I shall support it. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will also be able to support it if they are called upon to do so. Everyone knows how the obnoxious Front Nationale party in France has grown. Also, as the hon. Member for Aylesbury said, the British National party has been responsible for the death of Rolan Adams. It has an obnoxious headquarters in the Bexley area and we hope that the police, the Home Office and so on will be able to ensure that that racist organisation and its headquarters is closed down. There have been severe attacks in Britain. The political thrust behind the racist attacks must be tackled and I hope that the Government are prepared to do that.

A number of things need to be done. First, the Race Relations Act 1976 is long overdue for renewal. Certain sections of the Act need beefing up and I hope that the Minister will tell us what he intends to do about that. The Commission for Racial Equality has been underfunded for many years. Not everyone supports the CRE in what it does, but in its ability to tackle the law and set legal precedents it is second to none. It has been prevented from taking up all the cases that it would like to because of a lack of funds. If the Government are keen to act, they must ensure that the CRE is adequately funded so that it can tackle its important job.

I agree with what has been said about the criminal justice system, but there are ways in which we can tackle that. The issue of all-white juries is being tackled in America by people of colour and it is beginning to be pushed in Britain. All-white juries sitting in judgment on people of colour must be stopped. I hope that the Government will consider that.

The issue of positive action needs to be raised once again. Since the Los Angeles riots, academics and others have decried positive action and have said, "That is where positive action gets you." In the past five or six years, positive action programmes in the United States have been discontinued by Presidents Reagan and Bush. The United States supreme court outlawed set-asides and other programmes that allowed black people and black businesses to win Government contracts. Poverty programmes and positive-action programmes were cut, but when the conflagration occurred people said, "The positive action programmes are no good." Those programmes were not given a fair run. The points that my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook made about contract compliance and a number of other matters should be considered. The Government must put their money where their mouth is.

I want to give some advice to the new Secretary of State.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Where is he? He should be here.

Mr. Grant: He should be here, but he can read *Hansard* tomorrow. I give him this advice. He has a reputation for being off the cuff and casual and for making flippant remarks. This is not the subject for him to practise those skills or non-skills, because people are extremely sensitive about it. He strayed into areas that he did not know much about. I advise him to be extremely cautious about what he says on these issues if he wants to keep his job for a long time.

We need money in certain areas. The Secretary of State said that £4 billion had been spent on inner-city schemes and tried to give the impression that the money had reached black people and minorities suffering in inner-city areas. None of that money reached black people and minority groups in my area. We should like to know who benefited from that £4 billion, if it was spent.

My constituents from black and minority ethnic communities need policies to reduce unemployment and to combat poor training. We need proper jobs for young people. Further and higher education provision must ensure that our young people have education opportunities. Meetings were held with young people after the Broadwater farm disturbances in 1985. Councillors said, "We have some nice apprenticeships for you. You can be a carpenter, an electrician or a nurse." The youths said, "We are not interested." One of them said, "I want to be a test pilot." Another said, "I want to be a brain surgeon."

[Mr. Grant]

It was automatically assumed that because of their colour they should be limited to particular jobs. That idea must disappear from our career services, our training places and from Government.

We hope that we are entering a new era. The Prime Minister talks about a classless society.

Mr. Vaz: He lived in Brixton.

Mr. Grant: He lived in Brixton. He grew up in a house that had many races and I appreciate that his heart may be in the right place, but he needs the advice and support of Ministers and civil servants to ensure that these issues, some of which I have raised today, are given a proper hearing, that we set an example for the rest of Europe and that racism is no more in our society.

6.14 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): Whenever the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) speaks as the authentic voice of many in the ethnic minorities, he should be listened to with great care. However, I wish that his speech had been shorter, as it has not left much time for anybody else.

The hon. Member for Tottenham mentioned £4 billion being spent on inner cities. I remember contract money being spent in Nottingham, where my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I come from, and particularly in the Radford area. Much time and trouble was spent on ensuring special provision for employing local people, even to the extent that contracts were switched from the lowest tender so that the local community felt that the money was spent for its benefit.

I should like to start where my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary finished and where my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) started and finished. All of us are committed to a multi-ethnic community and freedom before the law. We shall accept nothing less.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury on his speech. I am sure that he will not be diverted from the principles that he expressed. He succeeds an honourable friend of mine, Tim Raison, with whom I worked closely in debates such as these and on refugees. I appreciated what my hon. Friend said about his predecessor and the speech that he made.

I support what the hon. Member for Tottenham said about the rights of British citizens in Europe. British citizenship is a great and cherished right, and it has considerable historical freedoms. It should protect anyone who has it. I am concerned that when some of my constituents take a holiday abroad, particularly in the European Community, they are not treated as well as one would expect a British citizen to be treated. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will ensure that European Ministers who are responsible for the police and for the other services with which British citizens come into contact understand that, once citizenship has been established, British citizens who were originally from an ethnic minority or who are second generation should be treated the same. I support what the hon. Member for Tottenham said, because we want to ensure that being a British citizen means something throughout the European Community and wherever a British citizen travels.

I understand the difficulties of those who must interview entrants who are seeking to enter this country for family reasons. In my experience, different standards apply. I am aware of many cases where people made what I regarded as a perfectly normal request for a relative to attend, for instance, a wedding. Constituents of mine have even held the weddings of their two children at the same time to minimise the problems of families attending. I experienced considerable difficulty in getting their relatives here. I felt that I had to apologise to my constituent because I could not justify the reason why only one member of the family—an older brother—was turned down.

In such cases, I suggest—and I try to do this in the House and through the system—that one should carefully consider the person who issued the invitation. My constituents who have offered invitations are well-substantiated citizens who are a credit to, and offer much to, their local communities and are in work. They have no reason to do anything other than organise a family reunion within the law. When such invitations are sent, I often arrange for a letter to accompany it saying that the person who has issued it is a long-standing constituent of mine. Such letters could be used during the interviews in some countries when people apply for visas.

Finally, I wish to deal with the vexed question of the attitude of the police. When my eldest son was just 18, he was a fairly hairy specimen of his generation. He had a mass of hair, wore trendy clothes and necklaces. He is also a decent, fine man—he is now nearly 40, but I am talking about when he was 18. Being a generous and liberal father, I used to let him use my car, a reasonably expensive and new Rover 2000 TC. He was convinced that the police had it in for him because of the number of times he was stopped or approached as he went to get into the car. I remember trying to talk it through with him and with the police.

The principal point that emerged was that if the police were courteous in asking why he was in my car or about to get into my car, there could be little objection because, obviously, young people who looked like my son did at the time had no particular reason to be driving such a car on their own merit. If the police were courteous and if my son was able to be courteous in response, it was perfectly respectable. But if they were ill mannered, assumed that he had stolen the car and treated him in an unacceptable way, it was also unacceptable to me. That example should be borne in mind by the police forces when they approach people from the ethnic minorities.

The most useful way in which we can see the values that we have all expressed come about is to observe the way in which—certainly in the city of Nottingham and the surrounding area—the ethnic communities, which I remember first arrived in 1956, have been integrated into our society. However, we also want them to be integrated especially in the police force. I welcome what my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said about the numbers now in the force, but we want more in the magistracy and as barristers and judges and at all levels of our legal system. In that way we can have the assurance that we all seek that to be a British citizen and to live in this country is a special privilege. It should exercise all of us to ensure that that privilege is given to all, regardless of race, colour or creed.

6.23 pm

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): I understand that Disraeli was once asked to determine the difference between a calamity and a disaster. I think he said that if Gladstone fell into the Thames it would be a calamity and that if someone pulled him out it would be a disaster. As a successor to Gladstone, I add my congratulations to Mr. Disraeli's successor, and I agree especially with his drawing attention to racial attacks in his constituency. He highlighted the connection between such attacks and the British National party.

My constituency borders on Bexley, which is the home of the British National party. My hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) referred to Rolan Adams who would have become one of my constituents had he not been brutally murdered in a racist attack a few hundred yards from my home and not too far from the headquarters of the British National party.

In a debate on the position of black people in British society, it is right to draw attention in a predominantly white House to the daily experience of many black citizens who are subject to harassment, abuse and often violent attacks. I want to raise the connection that I see between the increase in racial attacks in my area and the presence of the British National party. Earlier this year, in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), the Prime Minister said that literature had been seized from its headquarters and referred to the Crown prosecution service. It is time to ask what was the result of the investigation into the literature that was seized. There is no doubt in my mind that literature emanating from the British National party headquarters in Welling is racially inflammatory and is an incitement to racial hatred. We have a right to demand to be told when the Attorney-General will take action against it.

I also want to mention legislation to the new Home Secretary in relation to provocative marches which incite racial hatred in sensitive areas. When the British National party proposed to march through Woolwich and Thamesmead recently, questions were asked by the local council and local churches, community groups and black organisations who feared the consequences of that march. The local police also wanted the march to be halted, but, for that to be done, it would have been necessary for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to tell the Home Secretary that, despite all the resources at the disposal of the Metropolitan police, he could not cope with the civil disorder that might arise from the march. Clearly, it would have been very difficult for the commissioner to say that. He should have been able to tell the Home Secretary that he feared the effects on local community relations if the march went ahead and that, on that basis, the Home Secretary should ban it. I hope that the new Home Secretary will review the ways in which such provocative, racist marches can be stopped.

Other hon. Members have mentioned a speech made during the election by the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker). From what was said to me on the doorstep after that speech had been made, it is clear that it incited racism and inflamed feelings in my constituency. The former deputy Prime Minister, Lord Whitelaw, was quick to dissociate himself from a Tory Member in Scotland. I regret only that the Prime Minister did not distance himself from the speech made by the right hon. Member for Mole Valley.

When speaking to an annual meeting of a racial equality council, my predecessor referred to two types of racism—the direct racism of physical attacks and abuse and direct discrimination and what he described as the "kid glove" racism of the immigration Acts. I disagree with him because there is nothing "kid glove" about the way in which immigration rules have separated families and stopped visitors attending marriages and funerals. Hon. Members of all parties have made a similar point. Although I disagree profoundly with the Immigration Act 1971, which was introduced by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), I am sure that he had no intention of its being used to stop genuine visitors coming to this country to see friends and relatives or to attend weddings and funerals.

The Home Secretary mentioned the issue of equality in the provision of services. He appeared to suggest that there was a fault in the Opposition's motion which suggested that black people do not have equality of access to services. Every survey that has ever been carried out, whether of Government services, local authority services or of health services, shows that black people and other ethnic minorities do not have equal access, whether because of the inappropriateness of the service, the way in which it is delivered or because of direct discrimination. I hope that the Home Secretary will recognise that fact and that he will support measures to deal with it.

Other hon. Members have mentioned penal services and the criminal justice system. There is ample evidence to show that black people are disadvantaged by the way in which the system operates. I am sorry that some of the Home Secretary's remarks seemed almost to suggest the criminalisation of young black people. I hope that he will make an effort later to distance himself from such a suggestion. He seemed to suggest that one problem was that so many black young people declared themselves not guilty and wanted to go to the Crown court. Rather than suggesting that that is perverse, he should consider an alternative suggestion—that many more young black people who are innocent get picked up and charged because of the way in which the system operates.

Many statistics relating to the criminal justice system have been mentioned. I believe that the mental health services are also an area in which there appears to be clear evidence of the operation of institutional racism. Why is it, for example, that black people are four times as likely as white people to reach a mental hospital through the involvement of the police, and twice as likely to have been sent to hospital from prison? Why are they twice as likely to be detained in hospital under mental health legislation? Why are psychotic black patients twice as likely as white patients, including white immigrants, to be detained involuntarily in hospital under the Mental Health Act 1984? There is adequate evidence to show that there is discrimination both in the diagnosis and treatment of black people within the mental health services. That area is ripe for a Government inquiry.

Much has been said about the need for ethnic monitoring in employment. I welcome Ministers' support for ethnic monitoring as an essential tool in employment practice to deliver equal opportunities. Regrettably, Ministers stop short of the necessary legislation to bring that about. Government Departments and local

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authorities are prevented, for example, from using their commercial power through contract compliance to ensure that there is equality of opportunity in employment among those who tender for contracts for local authority services.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) referred to the fact that anti-discrimination legislation on race did not extend to all parts of the United Kingdom. However, there is legislation in Northern Ireland which deals with religious discrimination. I do not suggest that that legislation should be extended to Great Britain, although I believe that we may draw some positive lessons from certain elements of the fair employment legislation. In the White Paper "Fair Employment in Northern Ireland", which was published in 1988, the Government say:

> "The legislative measures detailed in this White Paper are strong; they are also fair. They require best employment equality practice from employers, including compulsory monitoring and affirmative action measures where necessary; they provide for strengthened enforcement powers through the criminal and the civil law; and they use the Government's economic strength to support good practice."

If best employment equality practice is right in Northern Ireland, why should we have second-best employment equality practice in the rest of the United Kingdom?

I hope, therefore, that in considering the second comprehensive review of the Race Relations Act 1976 which has been carried out by the Commission for Racial Equality—there was no formal response to the first review—the new Home Secretary will respond formally and positively. I hope that he will take a step along the road to providing equal access and equal opportunity to all our citizens.

6.33 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) and especially to his point about marches. He spoke about the balance needed between the right to march and the right not to have one's civil rights interfered with by such marches. I hope that he will return to that matter.

I also listened carefully to the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant), who said that everyone agreed with him. I certainly agreed with one particular point. He referred to the Irish dimension and I join him, if I heard him aright, in suggesting that Home Office Ministers might consider the discrimination—if one calls it that—of the Irish being excluded from section 11 grants. The hon. Gentleman also gave some horrendous examples of what is happening in Europe and he was right to do so, even if it went a little beyond the terms of the motion. I am sure that we need to consider those problems as we take on the presidency in Europe.

As the hon. Gentleman spoke, it struck me that the more I listened to him, the more I realised how fortunate we are not to have such circumstances in this country. The more one thinks about that, the more one realises that the reason why we do not have such circumstances is that we have a firm view of the kind expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) in his excellent maiden speech. He proved himself to be a true inheritor of Disraeli's seat and of Disraeli's philosophy on these matters. I hope that we shall hear him putting that view on many occasions. Such views are the surest way in which we shall have good race relations in this country.

I could not be here without the support of many people of many ethnic and racial origins. Some 25 per cent. of my constituents come from other parts of the world, especially from black countries, whether in Africa or in the Caribbean, and from the Asian communities. I am scarcely conscious nowadays of the colour of my constituents. We have become far more colour blind. They are people, they are constituents, they have problems and they show me the opportunities they have seized. I have worked happily with them. I hope that increasingly we shall not need debates such as this, as people from different backgrounds or from different parts of the world who have come to live here feel themselves part of our United Kingdom.

I remember that great Conservative candidate Lurleen Champagne saying—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am delighted to hear Opposition cheers. Her great statement was that she was black, she was British, she was Conservative—and she was proud of all three. We can be proud of that as well.

Mr. Vaz: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bowis: No. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but I must hasten through my speech.

The debate has raised a number of issues, including the central issue of jobs. I welcome what has been said about jobs, and I welcome what the Government are doing about job opportunities and the way in which they seek to end any discrimination that there may be. The solution is linked with education and training, and with providing opportunities there.

We must also ensure that there are opportunities in appointments. I want to see more role models from different communities among our police and our magistrates so that people see the opportunities and feel that those in authority are as much their people as anybody's.

We need to consider the whole question of tolerance in our society, and religious tolerance is part of that. We can find ways in which to make religious practice more possible. It is a two-way movement. I have done what I can to ensure, for example, that my Muslim community has adequate burial grounds of the type needed for its religious practice. I am entitled to ask those Muslims to ensure that the Muslim community responds, not least in those Muslim countries where religious tolerance is not the norm. In that way, we can get a better understanding round the world.

I have touched on Muslim issues and there are a number that we should study carefully. Early in the debate, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary referred to voluntary-aided schools. He is right in suggesting that there is no discrimination in the way in which the Muslim communities have been unable to obtain voluntary-aided schools to date. However, there are obstacles which I should like to see removed. If one obstacle is the definition of "available places", we must try to find a better way to define that term. The same is true of single-sex schools. I was glad to hear the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) acknowledge that the Labour party's policy on single-sex schools may be changing so that there could be the opportunity for such schools, and for hospitals for women.

One of the most important issues, from the Muslim point of view, is the need to consider the anti-discrimination law. Following the 1991 Sheffield judgment, it is felt that the law should be clarified and possibly amended. The Muslim community feel that they have been excluded from protection measures that apply to Christians, Jews, Sikhs and others.

Let me also ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to discuss with his colleagues ways in which we can help people in this country when disasters occur elsewhere in the world. When a natural disaster took place in Bangladesh, involving floods, death and destruction, many people in this country were affected because they were related to the victims. In such cases, relatives often do not know what is happening. I believe that we could help them by providing a more efficient source of information, and by recognising the need for counselling, especially bereavement counselling.

I hope that the policy so eloquently described by my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury—and, earlier, by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary—will continue. It is a "one-nation" policy. Many peoples have come to this nation: Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Danes, Romans, Normans, Huguenots and Jews; more recently, Jamaicans, Bengalis and Ghanaians, among others; and, more recently still, the Somalis and Ethiopians who have come to my constituency. I hope that we can continue to prove to the world that we can provide a one-nation society that sets an example to the rest of the world, demonstrating how people from different backgrounds can preserve their own identity while nevertheless integrating in a happy and forward-looking society.

6.41 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): This has been a short debate—perhaps too short. We have heard only one maiden speech, from the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington). I enjoyed the tour of his constituency that he provided: in common with many other Scottish Members, I have flown over it often enough, waiting to land at Heathrow, and I was interested to learn about what goes on beneath the clouds. I agreed with what the hon. Gentleman said about racial attacks, too. He will be pleased to learn that, judging by the Minister's expression—which, of course, he could not see at the time—his criticism of the Home Office delays in dealing with the section 11 review struck home.

The Tory attitude to this issue is interesting. The Government amendment, and the Home Secretary's speech, sit very ill with what the Tory party does in practice—especially before general elections. Before the election, the Asylum Bill was said to be desperately needed. Where is it now? Immediately before the election, the former Home Secretary made what I can only describe as a very grubby speech in which he attempted to equate immigration with proportional representation. He spoke of "a pact with the devil". He must feel very hard done by, finding himself on the Back Benches again, although many Conservative Members owe their presence in the House to what he said before the election. I am sorry to note that not one of the signatories to the Government amendment has ever seen fit to repudiate what he—and, indeed, other Conservative Members—said then.

Racism and fascism are, of course, completely independent of the electoral system. The riots in Los Angeles, for example, took place in a town where—as far as I am aware—everyone is elected under the first-past-the-post system. Racism and fascism are on the increase in Europe because the ingredients on which they feed are present: unemployment, poor housing and poverty. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) pointed out, such elements have little to do with immigration controls, which are entirely independent of those who feed on people's fears and turn understandable concern into prejudice by pandering to the worst of those fears. That is happening all over Europe.

Moreover, more and more people throughout Europe are becoming disillusioned with their Governments, because those Governments are not tackling the problems that they are experiencing. They feel that Governments do not care for them, and that they have no chance of bettering their position. That sense of injustice, frustration and powerlessness is not helped by such remarks as that made by the Home Secretary, who said, when discussing criminal justice in this country, that the statistics did not show racial bias. They certainly seem to show something. We can all see that black and Asian defendants are treated differently from white defendants, and I feel that the Home Secretary owes it to the House and to our citizens to pay attention to the injustices in our criminal system rather than dismissing them as a statistical aberration.

The Government know that there are problems, and they ignore those problems at their peril. Must we really wait for unrest before anything is done? Cannot the Government realise that, if the problems are not tackled as a matter of urgency, we shall experience difficulties that we have not experienced for years?

The Government seem to dismiss the question of contract compliance. The Prime Minister says that he wants to live in a classless society—a society that is at ease with itself. Surely, if that is true, the Government should examine the imbalances in employment law. Companies operating in areas where there is a mixed population are employing a preponderance of one part of that population—and it is not just a question of ethnic monitoring. It is sometimes helpful to examine a company's total work force, and we find all too often that ethnic minorities are doing the unskilled jobs at the lower end of the employment scale. There are not all that many managing directors from the ethnic minorities.

The Government seem to have accepted that something must be done about the gender imbalance, but they are apparently not prepared to take the same positive action to deal with the ethnic imbalance. As was pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker), they have tackled the problem in Northern Ireland, but they do not seem to be willing to do the same for race relations in mainland Britain.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham made an important point. He said that we must not ignore the influence of local authority funding: in many instances, local authorities are taking the lead in trying to redress imbalances in employment, but time and again cuts and capping deprive them of funds to tackle the problems.

Other hon. Members have mentioned the Commission for Racial Equality and its proposals for the overhaul of the Race Relations Act 1976. The Act is in need of overhaul, and it is no great secret that the CRE held off from making proposals during the premiership of Lady Thatcher—as she now is—because it suspected that the Government would take the opportunity to undermine the

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Act. I hope that the Minister, when he winds up the debate, will tell us the Government's responses to the CRE's constructive proposals—in particular, its proposals to increase its power to investigate discrimination. We have heard about discrimination in regard to housing and social security. I believe that the CRE should be given powers to instigate investigations on its own account, rather than having to wait until it receives an individual complaint. That sometimes leads to difficulties.

The Home Secretary hinted at a review of section 11 funding. If the Government are indeed to embark on such a review, will the Minister tell us whether section 11 funding will be extended to Scotland, where it has never yet been provided? We live in a United Kingdom, and many areas in Scotland could benefit from such funding.

The situation in Europe has also been mentioned. Both my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham and the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) pointed out that many of our constituents face considerable difficulties in travelling in Europe, and will continue to do so after 1993, when the barriers come down in continental Europe and people are more liable to be stopped and asked to account for themselves. We believe that black and Asian people will be especially affected. Unless protection is provided across Europe for the rights of our constituents and all other ethnic minorities, discrimination will continue.

As has been said, the Government could take the opportunity during their presidency of the Commission to promote a directive against racial discrimination. I am afraid that the Home Secretary is right to some extent: no matter how deficient the legislation is in this country, few European countries have legislation anywhere near as strong. If the Government are serious about promoting good race relations—not just in this country—they should raise with other member states the possibility of a directive to strike against racial discrimination across Europe. It is badly needed.

If we are moving into a Europe that has no frontiers, the need for citizens to have rights that they can exercise not just in their own country but in every country in the EC becomes more important, and nowhere more so than a directive striking against racial discrimination. That and a Bill of Rights that we could use throughout Europe would be a significant step forward in redressing the balance between the citizen and the state, not just in this country but in the European Community as a whole. A Bill of Rights would go some way to redressing the problems that are now occurring in the practice and operation of our immigration rules.

This debate is not about immigration, but it is difficult to discuss the difficulties that are being faced by many of our citizens without mentioning the immigration rules. All of us know that, whether it is intended or not—it does not matter how it came about—very few white people ever have any difficulty with immigration authorities in this country. Invariably we find—I found them when I visited Heathrow and spoke to the immigration officials—attitudes that are quite clearly conditioned by an ethos in the immigration and nationality department which tells them that black and Asian people are different. I heard it said by one immigration officer, "You know what these people are like—sir," he added, remembering that some respect had to be shown for a Member of Parliament.

It is interesting that the Home Secretary had no defence at all to the anomaly that was raised when we discussed the primary-purpose rule. Why is it that a French citizen can come into this country with his non-EC spouse and their dependants without let or hindrance, yet if a British citizen wishes to contract a marriage with someone who is not an EC citizen, especially someone who is black or Asian and is not an EC citizen, he or she must pass the primary-purpose rule? Getting their children to join them presents even greater difficulties. That is a double standard, and it is absurd. The Government will have to tackle it whether they like it or not. It might be better if the Government themselves were to tackle it rather than wait for the European Court to tell them that they have to scrap the rule. The primary-purpose rule is indefensible and it needs to be tackled.

I also agree with my hon. Friends that, especially following the scrapping of hon. Members' rights to make representations, the lack of any effective right of review of the operation of the immigration rules means that decisions are becoming increasingly absurd and increasingly open to challenge because immigration officers know that there is no effective challenge to their decisions. It is no use saying to somebody, "Go back 3,000 or 4,000 miles and appeal," because very often the reason for the visit may have passed by that time.

The Government must accept that the immigration rules are discriminatory. To some extent, all immigration rules are discriminatory, by their very nature, but unless the Government address the injustices, the sense of frustration that many of our citizens feel is likely to increase.

If the Government want a classless society that is at ease with itself, they must too realise that many of our citizens feel that they are not wanted and are forgotten by the Government. Yes, it is all very well to put fine words in the amendment and for an emollient speech to be made by the Home Secretary, but the people of this country see what the Government did, what their spokespeople did before the election, and what they did in practice. Unfortunately, Government action is very different from the words of the debate. I very much hope that, when we return to the subject, which will not be in the too-distant future, the Government will at least have some concrete and positive proposals to put before the House.

6.52 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I have listened to the debate with interest and close attention.

As my time is very short, and as I may not otherwise refer to him, I should particularly like to single out the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington). He made a first-rate maiden speech. He displayed that informed good judgment that is to be expected from a former political adviser to the Home Office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and an admirable anger and disgust at racial attacks. The House will also have warmed to his remarks about his predecessors, particularly his tribute to Tim Raison, who is much liked and much respected on both sides of the Chamber. Hon. Members look forward to hearing from my hon. Friend again.

The debate has properly ranged widely, as race relations bear on most aspects of our national life. It has

occasioned strong feelings as well. That is natural as discrimination can have a powerful impact on the lives of those in minority communities. I have no quarrel with hon. Members who draw attention to the discrimination that undoubtedly exists. That is why the Government are pursuing vigorously policies designed to end racial discrimination and disadvantage and to promote equal opportunity.

However, it is extraordinary that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) should argue, as he did and as his party does in the motion, that ethnic minorities receive less than their fair share of national resources when, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary reminded the House, vast programmes are directed to the inner cities where the great majority of ethnic minority communities live. As my right hon. and learned Friend said, those programmes amount to about £4 billion a year.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook sought to justify that remark by saying that resources had been withdrawn from local government. But local government spending has continued to rise, and the Government's contribution to that expenditure is distributed fairly across the country by the rate grant formula that was agreed with local authorities. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook simply did not make out his case on resources, hence our amendment. I had much more sympathy with some of the other points that he made.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about discrimination in jobs and the higher ratio of unemployment suffered by ethnic minorities. He was right to do so, although he was wrong to ascribe, if I heard him correctly, all the problems to discrimination. He felt that the anti-discrimination law, which impinges only indirectly on individual cases, was inadequate, but he forgets that the CRE has effectively used certain cases to open negotiations with companies and organisations to change their recruitment and promotion policies for the better. British Rail is a successful case in point. The CRE has also helped the police to develop their policies, too. We can see the benefits of that. Persuasion, backed by the law, is the right way.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to ethnic monitoring, as did several hon. Members. It has a useful role. We have it in the police, the prison service and the probation service, and, through the Criminal Justice Act 1991, we have a statutory obligation to monitor the impact of the criminal justice system on minorities. That will both illumine the right hon. Gentleman's point and show the way to the solution of problems such as bail, which he mentioned.

The right hon. Gentleman referred also to the desire of ethnic minorities to be visited by their non-resident relatives, and he spoke as though the natural wish is constantly being thwarted. It is not. *[Interruption.]* Each year, from the Indian sub-continent, for example, come more than 200,000 short-term visitors. They get their visas within 24 hours of applying. For the most part, they apply for them in new purpose-built visa sections that are designed to make visa applications more comfortable and efficient. Far from discouraging bona fide visitors, we welcome them. Alas, a proportion are not bona fide visitors; entry clearance officers refuse up to 16 per cent. of visa applicants from the ISC——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Lloyd: No, I shall not give way.

They are refused because the ECOs are not satisfied that they intend just to visit rather than stay. The overwhelming number of applicants are given visas. Alas, of that number, a sizeable proportion overstay. Last year, one in 12 Pakistani visitors with a visa applied for asylum at the end of their visit in order to remain here. In the light of those facts, I just do not believe that entry clearance officers are generally ready to say no when they should say yes. They might say no when they should say yes at times; but it is equally clear that they say yes when they should say no.

I have only a few moments left, although I have many points to cover. I conclude by saying that none of us wants any member of our ethnic minorities to be denied the opportunities that Britain has to offer. Discrimination and disadvantage have no place in British society. We are seeking with thoroughness and determination to root them out. That is why I ask the House to reject the Opposition motion and to support the amendment in the name of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:

The House divided: Ayes 264, Noes 311.

Division No. 25] **[7.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nicholas
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, James
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, William
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George

Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Michael
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoff
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Ms Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Khabra, Piara
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert

Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Timothy Boswell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House commends the Government's determination to work towards a multi-racial society, to which all ethnic minority communities contribute fully and in which all enjoy equal opportunities, as evidenced by their policies for tackling racial discrimination and disadvantage and for promoting equal opportunities, and by expenditure programmes directed at the special needs of ethnic minorities.

Maxwell Pensioners

[Relevant document: Second report from the Social Security Committee, Session 1991-92 (HC61-II) on the Operation of Pension Funds.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Madam Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

7.13 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to move,

That this House, whilst supporting the Government's initiative to recover from the banks, financial institutions and the Maxwell family the pension fund assets which were stolen, notes the Government's responsibility both because the Department of Trade and Industry gave an investment licence to two Maxwell companies which he used as a channel to steal the pension monies, and because of the deep flaws in the current supervisory system; considers that the new committee to review pension law should not have to take a year to complete its work and believes that emergency measures to protect occupational pension fund members should be taken without delay; and calls upon the Government to provide a more realistic sum than £2·5 million to underwrite the pensions of current and deferred Maxwell pensioners, some of whom have already suffered major losses through no fault of their own.

The purpose of the debate and of our motion is to test the adequacy of the commitments given by the Secretary of State for Social Security yesterday to the Maxwell pensioners. The right hon. Gentleman said yesterday:

"It is certainly our intention that those who are not being paid pensions and those threatened with a cut in pensions should receive and maintain pension fund payments."

Our motion is designed to probe whether that commitment is as copper-bottomed and complete as it might appear at first glance.

The Secretary of State's case is that his £2·5 million is a short-term emergency fund, until the £100 million locked in the common investment fund can be allocated to the nine different Maxwell schemes by a court ruling. That is his short-term solution and he was careful to distinguish it from a long-term solution

"to resolve the long-term problem; that will be done through the return of stolen assets, and the securing of contributions to the trust fund from those who feel obliged and willing to contribute."

Those are the Secretary of State's words and that was the Government's case. The Opposition believe that that case is misconceived, unreal and manifestly inadequate, and I shall set out the grounds for that view.

First, and most important, a denial of any Government responsibility towards the Maxwell pensioners was inherent in everything that the Secretary of State said yesterday. The right hon. Gentleman was careful to insist, several times, that—to quote just one occasion—

"No Government could accept a duty to make good losses resulting from fraud or theft of savings."

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): He said that several times.

Mr. Meacher: Yes, he did. Later, he also said:

"nor is there any question of Government accepting responsibility."—[*Official Report*, 8 June 1992; Vol. 209, c. 20-29.]

But the Government are responsible in general and in the particular. They are responsible in general because it was no ordinary fraud; it was theft from a pension fund set up as a result of a tax by Government. Pension contributions are not voluntary investments at will. Until 1988, the Government forced every employee to contribute to an occupational pension fund if they were not in the state earnings-related pension scheme. Therefore, the Government are ultimately responsible for those moneys, as they are for the secure and efficient use of other tax moneys.

I submit that the Government are also responsible in the particular because, as is well known, the Department of Trade and Industry granted a licence, before the independent regulatory organisation came into force, to London and Bishopsgate Investments and to another Maxwell company, which Maxwell then used as a channel to steal pensioners' money. The significance of that concession was well understood by one of Maxwell's closest associates, Mr. Larry Trachtenberg, who wrote at the end of a memorandum to Kevin Maxwell—one of the directors of LBI—

"The most significant aspect of this approval is the way in which it should strengthen LBI's IMRO application. Historically, the approval from the DTI for a Principals Licence was never easy to obtain and the fact that LBI managed to do so, so near the end of the old regime's life, is thought to be a very good sign."

In other words, it is clear that the DTI originally sold the pass.

The Government are responsible in the particular on other grounds. The Investment Management Regulatory Organisation was clearly flawed in its supervision. One of the Maxwell companies was not visited for nearly two years after IMRO authorised it, and then it gave LBI a clean bill of health, even when it found "no formal record" of transactions considered to be an essential control. In that context, we would like an assurance from the Secretary of State that the Securities and Investments Board report on IMRO will be published. I would be happy to give way if he wishes to intervene now to give such an assurance. On top of that, the Government failed to comply with the EEC directive 80/987, which required European member states to introduce legislation to protect the pay and pensions of employees in the event of their employers' insolvency.

For all these reasons, there is no question but that the Government are responsible, both in general and in the particular circumstances of this Maxwell scandal. Therefore, I ask the Secretary of State the question that I put to him yesterday at Question Time, but that he evaded. As he is responsible, will he accept the proposal from the Maxwell pensioners action group that their pension rights be assigned to him, that he pays their pensions and that he then recovers the costs by pursuing the banks? That is what the Government did in the case of Barlow Clowes shareholders, for whom the Government had far less responsibility. I think that I am right in saying that they had far less responsibility. I think that I am right in saying that the Government have now clawed back £100 million of the £160 million that they originally paid out in that case.

I ask again, directly to the Secretary of State, what I asked him yesterday. If the Government were right to do that in the Barlow Clowes case, why is it not right for them to do so in the case of the Maxwell pensioners, who are far more deserving? I would be happy to allow the Secretary of State to intervene to answer that question, which is the central question in the debate. I am asking him to comment directly on that question, of which I gave him notice 24 hours ago. It is not a question that I am popping at him now.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): I am hoping to catch Mr. Deputy Speaker's eye, and I shall be able to respond to the hon. Gentleman's speech in the normal way.

Mr. Meacher: That is fine, as long as we have an answer to this question—the central question in the debate. It is not acceptable that the only responsibility that the Government acknowledge in this whole wretched business is payment of the guaranteed minimum pension. I have been sent two examples by the action group of what this will mean in practice. The first of these concerns Mr. Cliff Jubb of Sheffield, who worked for the engineering firm Newton Chambers for 49 years and had been enjoying a pension of £300 a month. He is 74 years old and his guaranteed minimum pension will now be £6·72. Another pensioner aged 68, Mr. John Breadmore, enjoyed a pension of £10,000 a year and has now been informed that his guaranteed minimum pension will be £201·68 a year. That is slightly under £4 a week.

Are those the kind of consequences that the Secretary of State thinks it right and proper for pensioners to be left with if, as so many people believe—not only in the House but outside—the £2·5 million proves to be totally inadequate? Is he aware that those would be the consequences, and does he accept them?

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): I have the privilege of serving on the Social Security Select Committee and I am a member of the all-party group formed to look after the interests of the Maxwell pensioners, to which I am committed. Up till now, when the Opposition Front Bench team has become involved, the pensioners' interests have been looked after on an all-party basis motivated by commitment to dealing with the issues rather than scoring cheap political points and trying to point the finger at the Government. If the hon. Gentleman were serious about helping the Maxwell pensioners, as I know that both the all-party group and the Social Security Select Committee are, he would not turn this issue into a party political football.

Mr. Meacher: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is getting worked up into such an artificial lather. I am one of those—he may have been another—who spoke to many of the Maxwell pensioners after the Secretary of State's statement yesterday. I got the strong impression from all to whom I spoke—both the leaders and the individual members—that they were thoroughly dissatisfied with the content of that statement and with the uncertainty of the outcome with which they are presented. It is that to which I am speaking today.

Let me return to the Government's strategy, as outlined by the Secretary of State yesterday. Even if we leave aside the fundamental question of the Government's responsibility in this matter, there is one huge flaw in the approach that the right hon. Gentleman is adopting. It is that his is a voluntary scheme. Therefore, there is no guarantee whatsoever as to the outcome. It is literally all a wish and a prayer. Here are some quotations from the right hon. Gentleman yesterday. In his statement he said:

"the institutions involved may well feel some moral obligation to assist the pensioners".

Later, in reply to a question, he said:

"I hope that much more money will come from the City".

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): It probably will.

Mr. Meacher: We shall see. The Secretary of State also said:

"there is also a moral question, which we invite the banks and other financial institutions to answer."

My last, and perhaps most important, quotation is this:

"the onus is on those who had dealings with Maxwell in the past to examine their consciences and to see whether they should share the profits that they made in the past with those who suffered a great loss at the hands of Maxwell."—[*Official Report*, 8 June 1992; Vol. 209, c. 19-24.]

Mr. Lilley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I have been quoting the right hon. Gentleman's words, so I would be glad to allow him to intervene.

Mr. Lilley: The motion before the House urges the Government to underwrite the pensions of existing and future pensioners. Is it not the case that, if we did so, the chance of anyone contributing to pensions or returning a single stolen security voluntarily and ahead of time would be zero?

Mr. Meacher: I am coming on to exactly that point. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I know that that is often used to evade the issue——

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Read Lord Williams and——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) is out of order.

Mr. Meacher: The Secretary of State has come to the core of the matter. He is keeping down the Government's contribution so as to ensure that others will still have an incentive to make a contribution. If they do not, we shall have the disadvantages of both worlds—no contributions and a tiny Government commitment. As I made clear in Question Time yesterday, I believe that the Government should underwrite those pensions and then use the powers at their disposal to ensure that they get the money back from the banks and institutions.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No, I want to move on, and I am conscious that other Members wish to speak. I may give way later on.

Mr. Lilley: By definition, the legal powers are already available. We are asking people to go beyond their legal obligations to their moral obligations. In those circumstances, if the moral obligations have already been underwritten by the Government, what possibility is there of anybody fulfilling his moral obligations? What powers does the hon. Gentleman suggest that I should take to force people to meet their moral obligations?

Mr. Meacher: I am about to deal with that exact issue. The right hon. Gentleman will then see that he does have the powers; the problem is that he does not want to use them because he wants to keep the scheme voluntary so that the City might be prepared to give the odd contribution if it chooses. If the right hon. Gentleman really believes his comments of yesterday, which I quoted, he is more naive than I thought. The City is about as conscious-stricken as Maxwell was law-abiding.

It could not be clearer that the Government have one law for the City and another for the trade unions. The

[Mr. Meacher]

National Union of Mineworkers was pursued by an army of lawyers, and its funds were sequestrated because it failed to hold a ballot. The banks, which are holding on to £200 million in stolen assets, are given a limp slap on the wrist and then told to examine their consciences.

The right hon. Gentleman has said again today that he has no powers to force the banks' hands, but he has those powers and I shall tell him what they are. For the banks to operate, their banking licence must be reviewed regularly. I submit to the Secretary of State that it would be perfectly proper to threaten to refuse to renew the licence of any bank which is knowingly holding on to stolen assets and which refuses to hand them back. If he or his colleagues have those powers, why does the right hon. Gentleman refuse to use them? They could secure the outcome that we all want to see. That is the question he must answer.

There is another reason why the right hon. Gentleman should take a much tougher line. It is frankly deeply offensive to the Maxwell pensioners, living on the edge of poverty, to be offered a few pounds to keep them going while those who perpetrated the scandal are still living openly and legally in the lap of luxury. Not only does Kevin Maxwell still live in a £1·5 million Chelsea home, but he and his brother are allowed by the liquidators to draw a weekly living allowance of £1,500 from their otherwise frozen bank accounts. Apparently, they even have the money to consider establishing a new media empire. We are told that Mr. Larry Trachtenberg still has the free use of a £350,000 bonus that he received from London and Bishopsgate holdings for services rendered. What are the Government doing when, nine months later, the guilty still enjoy all the trappings of wealth while the victims are fobbed off with an average of £18 a week each, if they get anything at all?

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the two Maxwell brothers showed total contempt for the House of Commons when they refused to answer questions before the Select Committee on Social Security? They carry on with their millionaire lifestyle and show contempt for the victims, but, as my hon. Friend said, the Government show no concern whatsoever. It will be interesting to learn whether the Attorney-General will make a statement to the House—he should make it as quickly as possible—on when criminal prosecutions will occur.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): On a point of order, Deputy Speaker. Members of the Select Committee on Social Security were extremely upset, to say the least, when the Maxwell brothers came to us and said that they wanted a right of silence. We took extensive advice about that from within the House of Commons. At least one statement made yesterday about the Maxwell brothers might prejudice a fair trial, so will you advise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it would be helpful if all hon. Members did not seek to make cheap points at the expense of a fair trial?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The matter is not sub judice.

Mr. Meacher: I now turn to the question of the £2·5 million. It is a tiny amount precisely because of the Government's voluntary approach, which the Secretary of State made clear a few moments ago. He admitted that his rescue package must be small, otherwise it would let the banks and the other financial institutions off the hook from having to contribute. That means that the Maxwell pensioners will be left in the middle between the hard-nosed meanness in the City and the feebleness of the right hon. Gentleman in failing to enforce reimbursement. Instead of shilly-shallying with appeals to consciences and for discretionary contributions, the right hon. Gentleman should be underwriting the pensions in full and using every legal means and every other lawful pressure to make certain that the banks and the other institutions repay. That is the gap in the rescue package.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale) *rose*——

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford) *rose*——

Mr. Dickens *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens).

Mr. Dickens: As we are examining our consciences, does my hon. Friend—I call him my hon. Friend because he represents a seat in Oldham—recall the way in which Labour Members, at each party conference, fought their way through the picket line of printers to get to Maxwell's champagne? Will the Labour party return to the pension funds the contributions that it received from Robert Maxwell? Labour Members are frightened of the Minister asking for people to examine their consciences because that means that the Labour party must start to examine its own.

Mr. Meacher: As usual, the red-faced hon. Gentleman brings a serious issue into contempt.

The fact is that the Government's figures do not add up. The Secretary of State's case is that the £2·5 million is enough to keep the pension funds afloat until the £100 million is released from the common investment board in about six months' time. Even then, that will leave a shortfall of £458 million. The Government hope that the banks will repay £217 million of that, and they hope, perhaps dream would be more appropriate, that the remaining £241 million will be covered by voluntary contributions. That is about as likely as Mrs. Thatcher becoming Prime Minister again. I know that is something that the right hon. Gentleman devoutly desires, but it will not happen.

As everyone can surely see, at the end of the day, there will be a huge hole in the Maxwell finances. It is perfectly clear that, after all the political hoo-hah has died down, as the Government hope, it will be the deferred pensioners —those who intend to retire in 10 to 20 years time—who will draw the short straw. Such is the cynical calculation that the Government have made and it is one that the rest of us, who have any belief in justice, must stop by making sure that the issue does not go away.

The right hon. Gentleman's rescue package is a huge con. It is designed to give cover to 6,000 pensioners only, when, with the wind-down of the Maxwell Media Corporation staff scheme and AGB funds, more than 12,000 are likely to require support in the next few months. There is no guarantee of a 100 per cent. top-up and the scheme will last only until the common investment fund is divided up. As I said, that is not the end of the problem. After a temporary respite, we shall be left with a much more serious long-term problem.

The provision of only £2·5 million to Maxwell pensioners is an insult when compared to the £160 million that was made available to the Barlow Clowes offshore speculators. Even the belated implementation of section 58B of the Social Security Act 1990, for which I am glad, will do almost nothing for the Maxwell pensioners unless they are made preferential creditors. I strongly press that course on the right hon. Gentleman, even at this stage. Until he takes powers that are adequate to the scale of the problem and recognises that hawking his begging bowl round the City is not only undignified but no answer to the scale of the crisis, the rescue package will remain a charade. We have tabled our motion to test the seriousness of the right hon. Gentleman's purpose.

7.40 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"shares a deep concern for the distress pensioners face as a result of the pillaging of pension funds by Robert Maxwell; applauds the initiative taken by the Government to provide temporary, emergency funding to help those schemes which have a particularly acute short term problem; and, while welcoming the decision to initiate a thorough review of the framework of pension scheme law, notes with approval the important part that occupational pensions continue to play in ensuring increasing prosperity among the retired population of this country."

It is a pleasure, on our second encounter, to follow the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), although I shall not be following him along his customary route, which is to go straight over the top, as he did again today.

Characteristically, the hon. Gentleman lambasted the Government response to the Maxwell affair. But he has misunderstood the problem, misrepresented the facts and misjudged the mood of the House. The House recognises that this is not an area for glib statements, easy solutions or partisan attacks. Most hon. Members support the carefully constructed package of measures that I announced yesterday. They have certainly been welcomed across a wide spectrum of opinion outside the House. *The Times* and *The Independent* both recognise that it would be wrong for the Government to underwrite the deficit left by Maxwell's theft. So does *The Guardian*. Its leader said that

"it would have been wrong—as the all-party social security select committee has noted—for the Government simply to bale out the bankrupt pension schemes. A much more subtle approach is needed . . . The Government's strategy is both clear and sensible . . . Mr. Lilley had a balance to strike yesterday between short-term pressure and long-term reconstruction . . . the initial balance is there."

I hope that by quoting *The Guardian* I have not discouraged the paper from supporting me again.

Dr. Hampson: There was an aspect of yesterday's welcome package that I hope my right hon. Friend will clarify. It concerns those Leeds pensioners who have lost their pensions for two months. There was no clear commitment yesterday that those payments would be paid retrospectively. Can my right hon. Friend relieve them of their anxiety?

Mr. Lilley: I cannot ensure that—*[Interruption.]*—but it is certainly the intention that payment will be made henceforth and that the grant will enable that payment to be made. I shall look into the point that my hon. Friend raises.

Before dealing further with the remarks of the hon. Member for Oldham, West, I wish to pay tribute to the efforts of the all-party group on occupational pensions and the members of the Select Committee on Social Security in the last Parliament. It is a longstanding convention that occupants of this Bench, when presenting welcome proposals, present them as if they were entirely their own ideas, immaculately conceived and produced without any outside influence. I believe that the package that I announced yesterday would have been developed in direct response to the plight of pensioners without any outside prompting, but it is only fair to admit that the efforts of the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and of my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) made its arrival all the more certain. I am grateful to them, to members of the all-party group and to members of the Select Committee on Social Security in the last Parliament. All of them were rowing in the same direction and we have all converged on similar ideas.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Many welcome the fact that there is to be a committee of inquiry, as announced by the right hon. Gentleman yesterday, into the structure of pension funds. But does he accept that the disaster of the Maxwell pension fund was, in a sense, a disaster waiting to happen because of the inadequacy of the legal framework surrounding the ownership and control of pension funds and the degree of self-regulation that exists in the City? While I appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's need for a committee of inquiry, does he not think that 12 months is too long in this matter and that we need action more urgently to protect all the other pension funds and contributors to pension funds throughout the country from the kind of appalling scandal that we, through the Select Committee, have uncovered in the case of the Maxwell empire?

Mr. Lilley: No, I would not accept that it was inevitable that the Maxwell fraud would be perpetrated. To the extent that it, or the questions that have been raised following it, suggests that there should be changes in the pensions framework—the law and regulation of pensions —we see that we need seriously to consider those changes rather than to jump precipitately into changes without giving the issues proper consideration. I shall return to that matter later.

Mr. John Greenway: It is worth the House taking note of the fact that we are talking about two separate animals in terms of pension rules and regulations. There are large self-administered schemes, such as the Maxwell scheme, and it is right that, for compensation, people should look first and foremost to those who ran that scheme rather than to the Government. But a large number of occupational pension schemes in Britain are insured schemes and are subject to much more rigorous regulation. The pensioners in those cases are protected by the Policyholders Protection Act 1975. Many people would like reassurance from my right hon. Friend that their pensions are safe because of the protection given to them by that Act.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend, who is a leading expert on pension matters, is absolutely right. It is wrong to suggest that, because of this terrible crime, everybody should be going about in fear and trembling, particularly if they are in the sort of schemes to which my hon. Friend referred.

[Mr. Lilley]

The hon. Member for Oldham, West and I agree that the Maxwell pensioners have been the innocent victims of a vile and unprecedented crime. But the Maxwell pensioners and the House do not want the undeliverable promises of the hon. Member for Oldham, West; they want a considered package of measures that will help to give them peace of mind about their immediate financial future, to secure the assets that will pay their pensions in the years ahead and to ensure that a similar crime can never happen again.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe) *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: I will make a little progress before giving way further.

That is why, in my statement yesterday, I announced a package of five measures to deal with the short, medium and long-term issues raised by Maxwell. In the short term, we need to ease the acute pressures while assets are unlocked from the central fund. That is why I announced temporary, emergency funding to help schemes restore and maintain pension payments. That should give pensioners greater peace of mind about their immediate financial future.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West) *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: I hope that my hon. Friend will allow me to make some progress.

In the medium term, we must secure the return of stolen assets and any other funds to help pay pensions in the years ahead. To that end, I have established a special unit in my Department. It will work alongside the pension scheme trustees and others to secure the return of assets and their fair distribution between funds. The unit began work in embryo today.

I must tell the House that even if one was as successful as the hon. Member for Oldham, West believes it would be possible to be, deploying an array of powers that probably do not exist, in securing the return of all the stolen assets that were used as collateral for loans, that would still leave a considerable deficit. We expect the unit to establish a trust fund to mobilise support from those who recognise a moral obligation towards the Maxwell pensioners or who have an interest in maintaining faith in the integrity of the pensions industry.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: I wish to make some progress, and I am outlining the measures. I will then come to matters that will give an opportunity for hon. Members to raise any points that they wish to put.

In addition to the fund, I announced the implementation of regulations under the Social Security Act 1990 which will have the effect of making Maxwell pension schemes ordinary creditors of their employer companies, though I emphasised that the financial benefits likely to flow from that were limited. Parliament did not grant power to the Minister to make regulations that would have made pension funds preferential creditors, rather than ordinary creditors, of the employer companies.

For the long term, we need a framework of law that will prevent such a crime ever recurring and which will provide a firm basis for the pensions industry to grow. That is why I announced a wide-ranging review under Professor Goode.

Mr. Alfred Morris *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: I am anxious, before giving way further, to finish outlining the measures that I announced yesterday.

The basic mistake of the hon. Member for Oldham, West is that he simply does not understand the problem. He fails to recognise that the acute short-term problem is distinct from the longer-term problem of restoring or replacing lost assets.

The Maxwell pension funds have some £230 million of assets safe in their hands, but £100 million of it is in the common investment fund that handles part of their investments, while the remainder is in individual schemes. It has not been possible to agree how much of that £100 million is attributable to each scheme. The trustees have therefore agreed to submit to a court ruling the allocation of that £100 million. But that will take a few months and, until then, that sum is frozen. Our repayable grant is designed simply to cope with the acute short-term pressures faced by the schemes while that situation persists. It will also enable progress to be made in securing the return of some of the stolen assets and obtaining other funds.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West and others ask, "Why £2·5 million?" That figure is based on my official experts' assessment of the position of the various schemes. They are better placed than anyone else to make such an assessment and have also taken into account the possibility that the court ruling may be later rather than sooner. So I am confident that the sum allocated is sufficient for the purpose.

As far as I am aware, the hon. Member for Oldham, West has no direct information about the state of Maxwell pension schemes. Yet his motion calls on the Government to provide "a more realistic sum". It is not clear why the hon. Gentleman feels that he is a good judge of what is realistic. Among the many admirable qualities that one associates with the hon. Gentleman, realism is not high on the list. I assume that he is demanding more on the principle of "never knowingly overbid". Indeed, his bids have been constantly rising. At the beginning of May, he called on the Government to mount a huge rescue operation, which he said that we could afford, costing £156 million. At the end of May, he called on the Government to meet the shortfall, which he then put at between £200 million and £300 million. His motion today calls for us to underwrite all the pension liabilities, which means accepting a current deficiency of £350 million. When the hon. Gentleman is comparing our £2·5 million with a £350 million deficiency, he is comparing apples with pears. The sum that we are making available is purely to deal with acute short-term pressures while frozen funds are being released. The longer-term deficiency can be resolved only by the return of assets and by securing other funds.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Returning to the right hon. Gentleman's proposal of yesterday, which is now at the heart of this debate, was there ever before a scheme for the loan of a lifebelt that was at once cash limited and time limited? What happens if and when the time limit runs out?

Mr. Lilley: I am confident that we have provided enough money, even assuming that the court takes longer

than it may to reach a judgment. The right hon. Gentleman says that this is a loan. Technically, it is a repayable grant. In other words, we expect the schemes to repay only if they are successful in getting back their assets and are able to do so without detriment to the pensioners. I hope that I have made it clear that there is no question of individual pensioners having to repay any sum of money. That is out of the question.

Mr. Madel: My right hon. Friend referred to short-term measures and peace of mind. I refer to the Maxwell Communication works pension fund and possible difficulties after 1 July. Can he assure me that, because of the Government's short-term relief, individual pensioners will not have to fill in forms or contact people but that from 1 July their 100 per cent. pensions will come through automatically?

Mr. Lilley: I confirm that that is so. An arrangement between those handling the grant that we have made available and the scheme trustees, who will discuss how the money should be allocated, will enable the hardest-hit schemes to resume or maintain payment.

Mr. Meacher: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that, from the beginning, I have consistently asked that the Government should treat the Maxwell pensioners in the same way as the Barlow Clowes speculators? He has still not answered that question. Although it was clear yesterday that he did not know how the £2·5 million was calculated, will he confirm that that sum is to provide protection for the Leeds pensioners and the MCC staff scheme only, and that if the AGB scheme and the MCC works scheme have problems in the next few months, it will not cover them?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman is wrong on all counts. It has always been clear that Barlow Clowes is not a precedent. I shall ignore his contemptible description of those investors as "speculators". The £2·5 million grant is not limited to a specific fund, but we believe that it will be sufficient to help the funds maintain and resume pensions over that period.

Mr. George Mudie (Leeds, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lilley: I should like to make a little progress, because there was an opportunity at yesterday's statement for the normal process of question and answer.

I must not be too hard on the hon. Member for Oldham, West. The Opposition motion bears many signs of hasty redrafting. I understand that, prior to my statement, the Opposition were planning to table an uncharacteristically moderate motion calling for short-term help, while pressure was put on the financial institutions to help with the long-term shortfall. But now that it is precisely what we have done, so the hon. Gentleman has had to revert to form. He has gone back over the top and tabled a motion calling for us

"to underwrite the pensions of current and deferred Maxwell pensioners"

in their entirety.

No Government could, in effect, agree to reimburse everyone who has their savings stolen. The whole House knows that. Moreover, if any Government did underwrite all the pension schemes, they would, at a stroke, remove the pressure on banks and others to release stolen assets rapidly or to contribute to the fund that we are establishing. The Opposition cannot deny that their motion would mean that not a penny would be contributed to the trust fund, and not a share certificate would be returned voluntarily early. The taxpayer would end up paying the whole of the largest possible bill.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Is the right hon. Gentleman prepared to make a distinction between the general Maxwell pension funds and British International Helicopters Limited? His speech has made quite a play on moral obligations to people in the City and banks, and I wholly agree with him about that. However, does he accept that, as the Government owned British Airways when British Airways sold the helicopter company to Maxwell, they therefore have a moral obligation to those pensioners?

Mr. Lilley: That does not follow, but I hope that those pensioners can reach an accommodation with MGN. Obviously, I shall look closely at that.

Another question that was raised yesterday, which may lie behind many of the points that hon. Members wish to raise today, is why the Government are not offering a clear guarantee that all pensions will be paid in full—100 per cent.—in the coming months. We certainly intend to ease the position of pension schemes so that they can restore or maintain payment of pensions while frozen funds are being released, but we cannot offer an open-ended guarantee. Moreover, some schemes have resources just sufficient to continue paying part, but not all, of the pension. It will then be a matter of negotiation how much the scheme pays and how much is met by our grant. Clearly, it would be impossible to negotiate while offering to guarantee a 100 per cent. payment, but I am confident that the position of all Maxwell pensioners over the next few months is substantially safeguarded and vastly more secure than it would be without this scheme.

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I speak on behalf of the AGB pensioner scheme. Is the Secretary of State aware how difficult it is for pensioners on low incomes to plan anything months ahead? Even on the basis of what the Secretary of State has said, such pensioners cannot plan this year's summer holiday or what to do for Christmas. On those pensioners' behalf, I want to ask the Secretary of State whether he will ensure that they are not left waiting until the last day of the last week of the last month before being told whether they will receive their next payment. Such insecurity is absolutely intolerable.

Mr. Lilley: I recognise that one of the legacies of Mr. Maxwell is the element of insecurity felt about the longer term. All I have been able to do is to try to ease the pressures, anguish and insecurity of the pensioners over this acute short-term period when schemes' funds cannot be allocated to pensioners as those funds are frozen. I do not pretend that we have relieved the longer-term anguish, which is a legacy of Mr. Maxwell.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West is keen to blame the Government for the pensioners' problems. As I said yesterday, crime is caused by criminals and in this case we know who the central villain was. It is nonsense to argue that, because a crime happened, the Government are to blame and so are liable to compensate the victims.

When a burglary occurs, we do not say that the police and property laws for which the Government are responsible have failed, so the Government are to blame

[Mr. Lilley]

and must reimburse every householder. Of course, we must keep under constant review our systems for preventing fraud and theft from pension schemes. If we find sectors where improvements are needed, that cannot be held as an admission of responsibility for crimes that have not been prevented.

Mr. Rupert Allason: I have followed everything said by my right hon. Friend and agreed with him until he apparently said that there was only one person responsible for the crime and we could all blame Mr. Maxwell. In my view, all the directors of Mirror Group Newspapers and everyone connected with Maxwell who have had their fingers in the till for so long should have resigned months ago. Does not my right hon. Friend agree?

Mr. Lilley: I said that the central villain was Robert Maxwell. I am not making any judgment on whether any other people were involved. That is a matter for the Serious Fraud Office to establish.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the Secretary of State answer fully the question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce)? The Secretary of State is basically saying that in 1986 the Government handed over British Airways' helicopter division to the central criminal figure in the scandal. As he said yesterday in response to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), the Government knew that Maxwell had been reported as unfit to run a public company. Does not the Secretary of State think that, at the very least, the Government have a moral obligation to those British International Helicopter pensioners?

Mr. Lilley: Many of the companies in the Maxwell group were bought from other people. I do not believe that many people would think that previous owners have a moral responsibility for what the subsequent owners do. The helicopter division was bought from British Airways, and British Airways was not required to seek Government approval for that sale.

To return to the issue of blame, the hon. Member for Oldham, West asked specifically about the report of the Securities and Investments Board, and I promised to respond. It is up to the SIB to state whether it intends to publish the report. I understand—although I only have it second hand—that the SIB intends to publish its findings.

The review of pension law was a major aspect of yesterday's announcement. The hon. Member for Oldham, West said that 12 months was too long a period for the review of pensions. I agree that the need is urgent. The House will recall that I have not only asked Professor Goode to report within 12 months, but said that if his committee finds changes that should be implemented urgently, it should report to me sooner. The committee needs time to invite evidence from all interested parties, and it will hold a number of public hearings.

I was interested to note that Sue Ward, a leading pensions expert, said on the Radio 4 PM programme yesterday that the review team would have to work hard to complete its task in 12 months. She said:

"Twelve months was certainly not too long a time."

The Opposition motion states that

"because of the deep flaws in the current supervisory system"

the House

"considers that the new committee to review pension law should not have to take a year to complete its work."

I think that most people would consider that, before changes are made to rectify deep flaws, there should be deep reflection.

In his article in *The Times*, the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) states that he wants the review to consider reforms to make pension contributors holders of their own contributions. We have given the review deliberately wide terms of reference to look at the status and ownership of occupational pension funds. We have not ruled out consideration of the hon. Gentleman's suggestion—far from it. I believe that the hon. Gentleman's ideas are sufficiently attractive to warrant others considering them if the review team feels that they are not relevant to its work.

Mr. Win Griffiths: This debate is principally centred on the Maxwell pension scandal, but the Secretary of State should be aware that pension funds are in deep difficulties. The Oakwood pension plan affects my constituents. It appears that a director of the employers took the major decisions related to the pension plan against the advice of the actuary. Will Professor Goode consider such aspects, as well as considering what went wrong with the Maxwell pension scheme?

Mr. Lilley: Very much so—I am sure that Professor Goode will want to look at any evidence of deficiencies and problems. It would be quite right to do so if we are to change the law and regulate to ensure that such crimes do not recur. I shall draw the issue raised by the hon. Gentleman to Professor Goode's attention.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Secretary of State aware that, with the help of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, British Coal officials have just awarded themselves another pension holiday? What does he think about that in view of the scandal that has come to light? When I met some of the *Daily Mirror* pensioners yesterday, I bumped into some *Daily Express* pensioners. They told me that a few years ago the *Daily Express* changed its pension fund and as a result they do not receive year-on-year increases. The *Daily Express* officials fiddled the fund and created a new one for the current employees, but those who worked for the paper for 30 or 40 years will not get a penny piece. The Maxwell scandal has highlighted the fact that, across the board, pension managers and organisations such as British Coal and the *Daily Express* have been fiddling funds and depriving pensioners of their proper entitlement. What is the Secretary of State's view on that?

Mr. Lilley: The Maxwell case was certainly a terrible scandal, but the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) sees capitalist plots, scandals and conspiracies everywhere. If he intervenes too many times in my speech and his hon. Friends see the names Lilley and Skinner linked together in the pages of the *Official Report*, they will think that he is part of a major capitalist enterprise—*[Interruption.]* I never thought that I should see the hon. Member for Bolsover lost for words——

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: Those listening to the hon. Members for Oldham, West and for Bolsover would think that occupational pension schemes were disastrous and that all occupational pensioners were at risk of fraud. People

listening to the debate will realise that the hon. Member for Oldham, West has a hidden agenda to abolish private pension arrangements and replace them with an expanded state earnings-related pension scheme. The hon. Gentleman is doubly mistaken.

Occupational pension schemes have largely been a great success and 69 per cent. of recently retired pensioners now receive an occupational pension. That compares with just 54 per cent. in 1979. Average incomes from occupational pensions almost doubled between 1979 and 1988, the last year for which we have figures. Moreover, they increased the volume of long-term savings available for long-term investment in industry. There is no way in which public finances could accommodate the sort of expanded SERPS that the hon. Member for Oldham, West would like and appears to have in mind. Future generations could not possibly cope with the level of debt that would be stored up. The success of occupational pensions is matched by personal pensions which now extend to 4·5 million people.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): Occupational pension schemes may have been extremely successful in recent years. However, does the Secretary of State agree that the profits from those investments, which are nothing less than the deferred earnings of the occupational pensioner, should be redirected in the interests of members of pension schemes and nobody else?

Mr. Lilley: I have explicitly made it possible for Professor Goode to consider that issue in his review.

Personal pensions have dramatically widened the range of people with their own pension to supplement the state pension. They have also increased the volume of committed long-term savings available for investment in industry as well as giving millions of people greater flexibility and mobility. I accept that not just the private sector but the state has a role to play. The Government have ensured that total expenditure on benefits to the elderly has increased since 1979 by one third in real terms.

We have met our commitment to maintain the value of the basic pension and will continue to do so. We have provided systematically for real increases in pensioner premiums by directing money to the poorer pensioners. Overall pensioners' incomes have increased by 34 per cent. since we came to office. That is five times faster than under Labour, not least because under the last Labour Government pensioners lost heavily as a result of inflation. I am not in the mood to listen to self-righteous lectures from the Opposition on protecting pensions.

Mr. Meacher *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman had his say.

The Government recognise and share the real concerns expressed by hon. Members and by people outside about Maxwell pensioners. We also share the revulsion at the crime that was committed. We shall give the Maxwell pensioners as much peace of mind as possible about the immediate financial future. We shall help to unlock and to secure the return of assets that will pay the pensions in the months and years ahead. Through the review that we have established we shall do all that we can to ensure that similar crimes can never happen again. We are taking real and practical steps in a highly complex area and I commend them to the House.

8.13 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I shall be brief because many hon. Members with constituency interests wish to take part in the debate.

I hope that the debate will send out three clear messages. The first is that the House welcomes the Government's rescue package. At this stage we are not especially interested in the amount of money or in where the idea for the amount came from. The House is anxious to ensure that in the short term every pensioner who was not receiving a pension and all those who were at risk of receiving a reduced pension will receive a full pension. We leave it to the Government to ensure that the funds are adequate to meet that important immediate objective.

The second message which I hope will go out is that the Secretary of State realises the extent of support from all hon. Members for his measures not only to retrieve the funds that were clearly misappropriated, but to reach those people who did well during the Maxwell years and who could make substantial contributions. We shall examine with interest the size of those contributions. I hope that the Secretary of State will not ignore the support in the House and that he will mobilise it if the need arises.

The third message is about the very long term. The Secretary of State rightly said that if he suggested that the taxpayer should foot the bill, few contributions would be forthcoming. He must realise what the feelings of his own hon. Friends and Opposition Members would be if his strategy failed or partially failed. The mood of the House is for him to press on urgently to get the contributions. We shall not be satisfied if at the end of the day those contributions are inadequate. The Secretary of State said that such statements might damage his efforts to regain assets and contributions for the scheme. I think not. Most matters that we deal with depend on the striking of a balance. Jimmy Thomas once said that if one could not ride two horses at once one should not be part of the circus. The Secretary of State must be aware that if his efforts to gain contributions are unsuccessful and he says that there is no help for these pensioners, the mood of the House will not be as easy-going as that of a circus.

8.16 pm

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): I am grateful for this opportunity to speak on an issue that greatly concerns all hon. Members, and especially those of us who met pensioners yesterday. I am sure that all hon. Members have constituents who are affected. In my constituency, 40 to 50 pensioners are affected. I am sure that those who came to see me, and especially those who had been told that they had received their last cheque, will be well pleased with the Secretary of State's announcement yesterday.

Of course the announcement is no solution to the ultimate problems and the traumas that undoubtedly face pensioners. They have been placed in this situation not by the Government—although to hear the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) one would think that it was all the Government's fault—but by those who certainly should have known better and whose actions were no credit to themselves or to the human race.

Whatever our political viewpoint, we are all totally committed, as are the Government, to justice for the pensioners. We must ensure that Maxwell pensioners have long-term security, and the Secretary of State's

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announcement yesterday goes some way towards providing that. The Government can only give a lead and they have accepted their responsibility by ensuring that short-term security is provided. That was one of the specific aims of the all-party group on which it specifically campaigned. I pay tribute to the hon. Members on that group who saw the issue to its conclusion.

I am distressed at what I heard from the hon. Member for Oldham, West. I have nothing but praise for the way in which the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) spoke. He spoke for me and, I suspect, for many hon. Members in that he encapsulated what I believe to be the true interests of the Maxwell pensioners. The hon. Member for Oldham, West, as I tried to intimate in my intervention during his speech, angered me enormously and did no service to the Maxwell pensioners. The worst possible scenario for the pensioners would be for those of us in the Chamber to start trying to score political points from the suffering of others.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): That is what the hon. Gentleman is doing now.

Mr. Day: I am making the very points that I have maintained throughout my interest in this subject on the Select Committee and as a member of the all-party group.

Quite rightly, the Select Committee was involved in this matter for some time during the previous Parliament. When we were debating and investigating the issue, we acted on an all-party basis. In fact, there was no division when the report was written as it was supported unanimously. That is the position that I am determined to defend, despite the attempts of the hon. Member for Oldham, West to destroy that consensus. I hope that hon. Members will remember the words of the hon. Member for Birkenhead and those of us who support his stance. If, like myself, he is honoured to be reappointed to the Select Committee and continues as its Chairman, that will be the best thing for the interests of the Maxwell pensioners, as I know that he and most other hon. Members have their interests at heart.

I commend what the Government have done in the short term. I hope that they will pursue the banks, which have a moral obligation to return the Maxwell pensioners' money that is in their hands because of the illegal action of others. I hope that the House will reject the motion and the intervention of the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

8.22 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I am glad that the debate is taking place, although not in every case is it being pursued in a way that is likely to achieve the best result. As the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) acknowledged, there are probably very few hon. Members who do not have some constituents who are affected. Some of us have substantially more than the hon. Gentleman. I have the operational headquarters of British International Helicopters in my constituency and my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) has its northern base. My hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) is our representative on the all-party committee and is pushing the case for compensation. He has a substantial number of affected pensioners in his constituency, and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), who intervened during the statement yesterday, also has a considerable number affected. I wish to speak on the general principles on behalf of all my hon. Friends.

I accept to some extent the Secretary of State's argument that, simply because people have broken the law, the Government should not be held fully responsible. However, we must acknowledge that what has arisen in many ordinary people's minds is surprise and shock that it should be possible for people to be able to get their hands on pension fund money in this way. To that extent, the House must welcome an urgent review to try to ensure that we plug that loophole as well as securing compensation for those who have suffered from the fact that the law is not up to scratch now.

It may be a naive question, but millions of people outside the House will probably want to know how it is possible for companies to get their hands on pension funds, which are the payments of employees and which are supposed to be held in trust and run by trustees. Is it right that pension funds should be able to invest in their own companies, given the conflict of interest that arises? Millions of people probably did not realise that that was possible and are surprised to know that it is. I hope that that will be taken into account in the review.

The pensioners have had a long and anxious wait and yesterday's announcement, although welcome, is not the end of the road. I agree with the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) that the argument about the sum of money is really irrelevant. The important issue, as was said yesterday by my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), is to seek the assurance that for the period designated by the Secretary of State every pensioner who would not be getting a pension because of the parlous state of the pension fund will receive their pension in full. That is the simple assurance that everybody is looking for. The Secretary of State has made progress on that, although I hope that in the reply the Minister will make it absolutely and unequivocally clear that that is the case.

It is inevitable that parallels will be drawn with the Barlow Clowes affair. However, I accept that it is not exactly the same thing. I accept the Secretary of State's argument that to suggest that those who invested in Barlow Clowes were wild speculators is absurd. Nevertheless, there is a recognised distinction in that those people decided to invest in something that was giving a better-than-average return. They were taking a risk and should have appreciated that. However, they did so in the belief that the company was properly regulated by a Government agency. Clearly, the ombudsman took the view that they had some justification for that faith, that the agency had failed and that there was at least a moral responsibility. As a result, the Government put up £180 million as a rescue package.

Pensioners who have deducted at source a percentage of their salary to be invested through trustees to provide them with an income after retirement expect to have a regime that protects the pension fund. They will inevitably make comparisons if they do not secure full compensation. However, I agree with the hon. Member for Birkenhead and the Secretary of State that pressure of every kind must be brought to bear on the banks and the City financial institutions to make a full and proper contribution to the rescue fund. Many questions will be asked and people will want to know under what sort of morality or business

practice banks are prepared to hang on to stolen money when its return would save some of their other customers from personal bankruptcy. People will believe, rightly, that the banking profession is in grave danger of bringing itself into disrepute if it does not release that money and contribute to the refunding of the pension fund.

The City institutions must think about this, too. It is important to put it on record that the vast majority of pension funds run by the City of London are honestly and well-managed and achieve substantial capital growth in relation to the contributions made. After all, that is the City's unique reputation in both the national and international market. However, that reputation could be seriously tarnished if this scandal is not resolved in a way that gives honour, satisfaction and comfort to the innocent victims who are very ordinary people.

Mr. Frank Field: Is not the point stronger than that? The pension schemes kept saying that everything was safe and those of us who raised questions about safety and reform were told by the bigwigs in the pension industry that we were creating trouble. It is their moral responsibility to make a large contribution to this scheme.

Mr. Bruce: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who makes the case extremely well. I hope that when the institutions outside the House read this debate they will understand the strength of feeling behind it.

Those institutions should consider an additional point. In the early part of the previous Parliament I was a member of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. We investigated the implications of the single market for the financial services industry in Britain. The Committee visited many of the main financial centres in Europe, notably, and most importantly, Frankfurt. We pressed the German Government to recognise the expertise that exists in the City of London and the important opportunity for German consumers to gain access to such expertise.

The House will be aware that the Germans thought that the City of London's practices were risky. They did not like the way in which moneys could be mixed without absolute guarantees and security for pensioners. The net result is that German pension funds are more expensive than ours but are more securely guaranteed, or at least that will be the German perception. If City institutions do not contribute, they will severely damage their ability to sell their expertise in the single market as it is established in the next few years. Even if they are not prepared to accept the moral strictures of the House, that fact should be taken into account. It is bad business.

I should like finally to deal with my interest in British International Helicopters. The Secretary of State will be aware that I and others believe that the company is different from others in the Maxwell group, for reasons that were partially explained in my intervention. I am grateful for his agreeing to meet the separate all-party group that has been established, when we will have an opportunity to press our case in more detail.

British International Helicopters was the helicopter company of British Airways when it was a nationalised industry. Its main operational base is at Aberdeen airport in my constituency. It has bases in Sumburgh in Shetland and covering the Scilly isles in the constituency of the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris). The company's southern access to the North sea is based in the constituency of the hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter), and its head office is in Oxford.

Since the early days of the North sea, the company has provided taxi services to and from the rigs and platforms. Lord King, the chairman of British Airways, conducted a strenuous campaign to ensure that the Nott assurances —that British Airways should be privatised as a single entity—were honoured. As part of the campaign, myself, the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) and the then hon. Member for Banff and Buchan were invited to present ourselves—I cannot put it another way—at a public meeting in my constituency, which most of the employees attended. Before several hundred people, we were invited to give categorical assurances that we would support the campaign to privatise British Airways as a single entity. Not surprisingly, faced with so many constituents, we agreed to do so.

Before the privatisation took place, British Airways sold the company. It tried to sell it to a business man—I remember blowing the whistle on him at Prime Minister's Question Time—who certainly was not fit to run it. It was subsequently sold to Mr. Maxwell, 15 years after the Department of Trade and Industry certified him as not being a fit person to take over a public company. In those circumstances, it is not acceptable for the Secretary of State to take the stance of lecturing City institutions and bankers about the moral position—which I support—while denying the moral pressure that is on the Government for having acceded to the sale.

At the time of the sale, I was told that pension rights would be secured because pensioners would continue to be members of the British Airways pension fund. Later, they were offered inducements and sweeteners to transfer to the Maxwell pension fund, which they were assured—I have the notice here—was a better fund to which British Airways was making a transitional contribution.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that it was a condition of employment with British International Helicopters that pensions be transferred to the Maxwell pension fund? I met two people yesterday who retained partial pension rights in British Airways' pension fund because, they told me, they did not trust Maxwell, but from then on they had to be members of what turned out to be Mirror Group Newspapers. Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that, at the time of the Maxwell bid, the bid of the management of British International Helicopters was rejected? Presumably, the Government had a considerable hand in its rejection. Those are two extra reasons why many hon. Members who represent British International Helicopters staff, past and present, feel that there is a special case to be made.

Mr. Bruce: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's intervention. He offers a degree of all-party solidarity to the point that I am making. The terms on which employees could retain their British Airways pension rights were disadvantageous. There was little incentive for anybody to retain those rights, and thereafter they all switched to the Mirror group in circumstances that offered them no real choice. The situation, therefore, is different from that of other companies.

We have never really got to the bottom of who paid what. I wrote to British Airways this year and received a reply from Lord King, who is adept at writing letters that

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tell one something but not enough. He pointed out that the company that bought British International Helicopters paid more than £12 million—less than the in-house bid. He neglected to say that British Airways subsequently made a payment of £9·5 million to transfer contributions to the pension fund. It is extremely difficult to determine whether Mr. Maxwell's offer was a better net offer to the taxpayer than the in-house offer. Perhaps we shall never know. It is the firm view of the current management of British International Helicopters

"that at the time of the sale the British Airways Board consulted the then Secretary of State for Transport, John Moore, about the provisional sale agreement with the company owned jointly by the Scottish Daily Record and Sunday Mail and Robert Maxwell. He saw no objection to it and the sale was completed."

That shows that, although the Government may not have authorised it, they raised no objections. I repeat what the Secretary of State said yesterday:

"the warning was made in public for all to see and those who dealt with Maxwell did so potentially knowingly."—[*Official Report*, 8 June 1992; Vol. 209, c. 26.]

That includes the Government, and they have a moral obligation.

The Secretary of State said earlier that he was treating pensioners as part of the Mirror group pension fund. The Mirror group has thrown them out of the pension fund unilaterally, having kicked out the trustee some time previously. They are not part of the Mirror group pension fund but are standing on their own. In those circumstances, I hope that the Secretary of State will accept that the position of British International Helicopters is different from that of any other company. If anyone is entitled to full compensation, its employees are. All those who trusted the City, the banks and the regulatory regime have every reason to believe that they should get not only a short-term rescue package that eases their immediate problems but a full-scale rescue package to which all those who have benefited from Maxwell in the past make a full and positive contribution.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Many right hon. Members hope to speak. Short speeches will enable hon. Members to catch my eye; lengthy interventions do not help.

8.38 pm

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): I should like to thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for asking me to speak for the first time in this debate, in which I have a constituency interest.

My immediate predecessor as Member for Hertfordshire, North was Sir Ian Stewart, who came to the House in 1974. He was an expert in economic affairs and finance and was known as a numismatist—an expert on coinage. He started as PPS to Sir Geoffrey Howe, became a Treasury Minister and subsequently was Minister for the Armed Forces and Northern Ireland security Minister. I know that all hon. Members will be sad that he had to retire through ill-health. In the constituency, he is remembered for his vigorous efforts on behalf of his constituents. His immediate predecessor was Shirley Williams who is remembered as a hard-working constituency Member of Parliament, although she did not always attend events on time. Of course, she also had a notable ministerial career, so I have a lot to live up to.

North Hertfordshire covers the towns of Royston, Baldock, Letchworth and Hitchin and three ancient market towns. Letchworth was the first garden city, set up by Ebenezer Howard in 1903. It has recently reached the size originally intended for it—30,000 people—and is a city concept that has been followed the world over. It has many imitators as far away as Japan.

Because of the time restriction, I shall not mention all the interests in north Hertfordshire in the traditional way. We want to protect the local environment, we want roads but we do not want them to spoil the villages and, in addition, we have lost many defence jobs. North Hertfordshire is presently applying for EC periphera funding to ease the change to employment in other industries, which should be successful.

The issue that has dominated my post bag since I arrived in the House has been that of the Maxwell pensioners. BDC Technical Services Ltd. of Baldock is a member of the AGB pension fund, and there has been considerable anxiety and distress among many of my constituents. I give two examples. I quote from a letter by a 63-year-old man who recently retired because of heart disease. He wrote:

"I am now informed that my pension will not be paid after June 1992. I always assumed that the pension scheme was as safe as the Bank of England. I am very concerned about my future."

I also received a letter from a 78-year-old woman, who wrote:

"My pension payment is £59 per month, a relatively small amount, but quite important to me as apart from my old age pension, it is my only other income."

Therefore, when I heard that there was an all-party group of hon. Members fighting on behalf of the Maxwell pensioners, the first thing that I did was join it. The words that we heard tonight from the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) were exactly those that he used at the first meeting of the group and on which we all agreed and which, I believe, have had a powerful effect on the Government.

When I explained to the Maxwell pensioners in north Hertfordshire what was proposed by the all-party group, they were more than satisfied with the fight being put up on their behalf. They were here yesterday to lobby, and I spoke to them shortly after the statement. They were relieved and content that the payments were to be continued with the life-belt funding for which we had argued.

I believe that the spectacle of major banks holding on to securities stolen from the pension funds is disgraceful. They should give back the assets. As a lawyer, I appreciate that there might be nice legal arguments to be employed by the banks. It might be that the argument that the banks' licences should be withdrawn is a complete non-starter because there are legal arguments that can be employed by the banks.

However, the case that must be made is the moral one. A second-hand shop that buys stolen goods expects to give them back if it is later discovered that they were stolen. For major banks—for example, National Westminster—to refuse to return the securities is a disgrace, and it is right that moral pressure should be applied. Legal pressure would possibly not work, but I am sure that the moral pressures that the House can bring to bear have every

chance of success. That is why I welcomed the Government's statement. It seemed that what was being said was that the drip-feed funding would enable pensioners to have peace of mind while the institutions were approached seriously and to be made to meet their responsibilities.

With regard to the deliberations of the Goode committee, there are three aspects that I hope will be considered. It will take a year for a major aspect of law such as this to be considered because the complexities—and I am a lawyer—seem to be marked. Let us first consider trust law. For years, ever since they began, occupational pension funds have been governed by the principles of trust law. The great advantage of trusts has always been their flexibility—that for generation after generation they can meet modern conditions—but what seems to have gone wrong with occupational pension funds which are self-managed is that that flexibility has been used by the employer to dominate the fund and to put himself in a position in which, if he is dishonest, he can take advantage of the trust in a way which no lawyer would condone and which now needs serious consideration.

It seems that trust law is no longer adequate for the purpose of dealing with the large occupational pension funds and that what needs to be considered is a system of regulation akin to the Companies Acts which requires regular accounts and statements to beneficiaries, the possibility of annual pensioners' meetings and penalties for non-compliance. The type of regulation required is so wide-ranging—one has only to think of what the Companies Acts requires—that it will take at least a year to put together a proper system.

Every share certificate or document of title in respect of a pension fund asset should have it clearly marked on the document, and the register of shareholdings kept at Companies house should be annotated to that effect. There are numerous registers in the legal world including the land registry and many others, all of which are capable of having such an annotation system imposed on them. It has worked extremely well with the class F land charge which applies in matrimonial proceedings and protects wives in respect of houses. There is no reason why the same principle in this aspect of law should not be applied to ensure that shareholdings are protected equally.

Another matter that I hope will be considered is a permanent compensation scheme to help the victims of pension fraud with reference to occupational pensions. It should be funded by a levy across the pensions industry. It could start in the way outlined yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and could become a settled part of a new pensions Act, giving peace of mind to occupational pensioners.

I believe in occupational pensions and in the remarkable change which they have wrought in British society in the past 20 or 30 years. Pensioners as a group are now the fastest rising income group in society, largely due to the confidence they have had in occupational pensions and, of course, in the private schemes which have already been mentioned. It is absolutely right that they should have a copper-bottomed guarantee that their pensions are safe so that the hope of my constituents is met by pensions being as safe as the Bank of England.

8.47pm

Ms. Janet Anderson (Rossendale and Darwen): May I congratulate the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) on an excellent maiden speech. His experience on the soap box at Speakers' corner will obviously stand him in good stead in his future career in the House.

I am grateful for this opportunity to make my maiden speech as the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen, a constituency which embraces five proud, separate and independent towns—Darwen, Haslingden, Rawtenstall, Bacup and Whitworth—and which has previously been represented by the late Tony Greenwood—later Lord Greenwood of Rossendale—and Mike Noble, both of whom are still remembered with great affection by many of their former constituents.

I am also fortunate to have the honour to represent a constituency which must rank among those with the greatest areas of natural beauty. When I am able to enjoy the rare opportunities for recreation which hon. Members have with their families, walking along the Rossendale way, through Sunnyhurst woods to Darwen tower, or across the west Pennine moors, stopping when we can for refreshment at the Strawbury Duck in Entwistle, or to watch the Britannia Coconutters at Rawtenstall station on the recently reopened east Lancashire line, I count myself very lucky indeed.

It was, therefore, appropriate that my predecessor should have served in the previous Government as Minister for the Countryside and that he should have represented a truly northern constituency. The recently knighted former hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen, David Trippier, will surely be remembered as the Mr. Green and the Mr. North of the Conservative Benches. Not only was he one of few Conservative Members to have been born north of Watford, but he displayed a real understanding of the needs of the northern region. I take this opportunity of congratulating Sir David on his newly acquired status, and I wish him well in his chosen new career.

It is also apt that I should have the opportunity to speak in a debate on the protection of pensioners and their rights. Almost one in five of my constituents are of pensionable age. The majority of them have toiled for years in the shoe factories and the textile mills, often for meagre wages. During the past 13 years, too many of them have lost their jobs, time and again, yet they have struggled to retrain, to bounce back and to do their best for their families. It has come as a great shock to some of them to find that years of contributions to pension funds have left them with little.

We are here tonight to talk about the plight of the Maxwell pensioners, and I will come to that as there are many of them in my constituency. However, I must tell the House that a similar plight has befallen my constituents who worked in shoe and textile factories which have gone to the wall and who have then found that their pensions are no longer secure. It is essential that the Government introduce measures to give greater protection to all members of occupational pension schemes.

One example illustrates the problem clearly. One of my constituents is a current pensioner of AGB Research, a company that has already been mentioned in the debate. It was one of many companies privately owned by Robert Maxwell. My constituent worked from 1925 until 1972 for the Newton Chambers group of companies. A mandatory

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condition of his employment was the joining of the company's pension scheme to which he contributed for no fewer than 47 years.

At present, he has a pension of £1,157 a year from the Maxwell-owned Headington group pension, formerly Pergamon. Through a series of takeovers, the Newton Chambers pension fund finally landed in the hands of the Maxwell group. My constituent has now been informed that his pension fund is being wound up.

My constituent is 83 years old and his wife is 73. His current works pension helps to pay his poll tax liability, and his electricity, gas and water bills—charges which, as the House is only too well aware, continue their relentless increase. If my constituent loses his pension, he will not only have difficulty in meeting those bills, but he and his wife will also have to sell their small car, which is essential at their age for shopping and local journeys.

I cannot help wondering whether, as Mrs. Maxwell languishes in her French chateau and the younger Maxwells continue to enjoy their apparently opulent lifestyle, they ever give a thought to my constituent who, any day now, may no longer be able to depend on the little extra which enables him and his wife to do their shopping, to visit the doctor, to see family and friends with reasonable ease, and to maintain dignity and independence.

Of course, my constituent is not alone in his plight; thousands are similarly affected. The Government have a moral responsibility to all those whose pensions have been stolen by an unscrupulous employer. The reason why the Government should accept that they have that responsibility is that the money, the deferred earnings of ordinary working people, was taken from them by virtue of a bad law. A number of guilty parties are involved—the Government, the banks and the regulators—but the one group who are entirely innocent are the pensioners.

The problem is one of loose law. Pension funds are covered only in part by the Financial Services Act 1986; they are mainly covered by trust law. Under that, regulation is looser and the position of trustees under the law is unclear. Both the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation and the Securities and Investments Board warned the Department of Trade and Industry on a number of occasions of the problems that would arise because of the discrepancy between trust law and the Financial Services Act. Indeed, the Hayton report, commissioned and published by IMRO and the SIB, made that point.

We must ask why the Department did not heed the warnings. In the short term, we need proper compensation for the pensioners whose pensions have been stopped or reduced. The Government conceded the principle of compensation for the Barlow Clowes victims. Those investors had at least made a conscious decision to make a financial risk investment. The pensioners whom we are considering tonight believed that they were taking no risk and that their futures were secure. Moreover, for many of them, contributions to the pension scheme were a mandatory condition of their employment. They had no choice.

There must be a considerable extension of the rights of pensioners in all occupational pension schemes. They must have information about their pensions, such as where they are being invested and their on-going values. The Government must guarantee that no pensioner will suffer as a result of this fraud.

An urgent review of the legislation is essential. Pensioners must be treated as preferential creditors of pension funds, increasing their protection and their right to compensation. The review must include a statutory compensation scheme. The discrepancy between trust law and the Financial Services Act must be resolved and the law must ensure the independence of trustees from employers.

This is a sad and sorry episode out of which none of the parties—the Government, the banks or the regulators—emerges with credit. They should all accept their responsibilities now, and they should do so with good grace.

8.55 pm

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): We have just heard two excellent maiden speeches. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) on his maiden speech, which displayed considerable knowledge about his constituents and their problems, especially in relation to the Maxwell affair. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms. Anderson) on her maiden speech. I predict early promotion for her to the Opposition Front Bench as I noted that the whole House enjoyed listening to her. I also believe that the whole House enjoyed listening to her fulsome and appropriate comments about her predecessor, who was much loved by all hon. Members, especially Conservative Members. David Trippier co-ordinated the Royal Marines group of Members in the House as well as carrying out extensive ministerial duties on environment issues. He also took a strong interest in small businesses. I am delighted that the Queen has made him a knight of the realm.

The debate is about the Government measures that were announced yesterday to protect the Maxwell pensioners and about other issues. Those measures were right and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has done well in extracting help for the Maxwell pensioners from the Treasury at a time when there are many competing demands on the social security expenditure budget.

Those Government measures should meet the immediate needs of the 5,000 Maxwell Communication Corporation works pensioners who face reduced pensions from this month and the 240 people in the Headington pension plan whose pensions have been stopped.

The measures are a welcome start while the recovery of the money takes place with a view to ensuring that the pension funds are fully, or almost fully, restored to what they were. That is why the implementation by the Government of section 58B of the Social Security Act 1990 and the setting up of a recovery unit in the Department of Social Security are most helpful. Those actions should result in much of the money being recovered.

This tragedy, which has brought misery to 32,000 people, is a disgrace. It is a disgrace which reflects very badly on the regulator, the banks and the financial institutions that had dealings with Mr. Maxwell. Yes, Mr. Maxwell may have committed the frauds, but the banks, financial institutions and bad regulation made it possible for him to do so.

Regretfully, I must say that IMRO is first in line. I say "regretfully" because I believe that the IMRO representatives who appeared before the Select Committee were honest and well meaning. I do not believe, however, that they and their colleagues had the necessary skills and support to deal with the problems that they faced. There were failures in authorisation on the part of IMRO: neither Bishopsgate Investment Management nor LBI should have been authorised. The implications of the Liechtenstein connection were not understood by IMRO.

IMRO should have realised, first, that no recovery of money can occur if fraud takes place in a Liechtenstein operation; secondly, that no up-to-date financial information will ever be available for a Liechtenstein-controlled operation; and, thirdly, that Mr. Maxwell—who was in absolute control—was likely to trade fraudulently in the end, because honest United Kingdom businesses do not need to operate from Liechtenstein. There was obviously bad regulation by IMRO of the two Maxwell companies. Accounting weaknesses were found; there was no adequate separation of duties within the companies; Maxwell controlled absolutely everything, and IMRO staff were too junior and too inexperienced to handle a man like Maxwell.

I find it strange that, even as I speak, at least £6 billion of United Kingdom investors' money is still controlled from Liechtenstein. GT Fund Management Group, a United Kingdom company, was taken over by the Bank of Liechtenstein in 1991, and IMRO is its regulator. That is a disaster waiting to happen. Who will pay up when the collapse occurs, as it surely will one day? The City regulators seem afraid to act, because the bank is controlled by the Prince of Liechtenstein. What does he know about fund management that Robert Maxwell did not know?

It is, however, the banks, in their many different roles, that are to blame for most of the losses incurred by the pension funds. Those banks range from the simple London clearing bank to some of the most sophisticated investment banks in the world. The position is not straightforward; what is clear and simple is the fact that they all failed to act properly, either because of incompetence, weak accounting and weak internal control systems or because of greed, recklessness or even criminal intent—I believe that that applies to at least one case.

In my view, the lending banks were negligent or reckless. They did not ask for consolidated accounts; it seems that they did not even ask for accounts of the entity to which they were lending. They did not check the gearing—the debt-to-equity ratio—of Mr. Maxwell's empire, or the cash flow of the group or of individual companies. Warnings in the media went unheeded by the bankers. On 5 November 1988, for instance, the *Financial Times* Lex column commented:

"Again the need to degear now makes Mr. Maxwell something of a forced seller."

He was indeed a forced seller, but a forced seller of the pensioners' assets rather than his own.

The investment banks that dealt in MCC shares have a heavy responsibility for the losses that were incurred. Their option arrangements were—if not illegal—devious. Moreover, MCC share purchases through Liechtenstein were clearly designed to avoid City rules and Companies Act disclosures. When one of the smartest investment banks in the world says that it did not know that Mr. Maxwell was behind the Liechtenstein purchases of MCC shares, the position is unbelievable. If an investment bank is as stupid as that, it is not fit to be in business and its banking licence should be withdrawn.

At least one investment banker in New York knew enough to be suspicious. He should have refused to carry out the share transactions; instead, he asked Mr. Maxwell the simplest of questions, and Mr. Maxwell told that sophisticated investment banker the simplest of lies.

The MCC share transactions carried out by that banker were designed to circumvent the voluntary code under which the City operates. There is no point in self-regulation if investment bankers can get away with hundreds of millions of pounds in shady deals without so much as a fine from the body that is responsible for their regulation. The Bank of England must show that it is prepared to withdraw banking licences; the stock exchange must show that it is prepared to withdraw authorisation to deal.

If the Bank of England and the stock exchange have neither the teeth nor the inclination to regulate the banks in regard to the Maxwell affair—given that the banks have so blatantly disregarded the principles behind the stock exchange's rules and regulations, and company law—we must all ask what is the point of self-regulation. So far, the Maxwell affair has shown it to be a fraudster's paradise, in which only the little man loses.

If the Bank of England and the stock exchange cannot police the United States investment banks, I hope that Members of Parliament will take the Maxwell pensioners' case to our friends in the United States Congress, as well as those in the United States Securities and Exchange Commission and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. They, at least, can police the United States investment banks, and they have the teeth and the inclination to do it.

What of the custodian banks? They pride themselves on looking after mutual funds and pension fund assets. Some £38 million of Maxwell pensioners' investments were passed by the Bank of America to Credit Suisse for use by the Maxwell family in transactions not authorised by the full trustees of the pension funds. I hope that those banks will speedily arrange to replace the lost investments. Those banks must realise that their credibility as custodians and lending institutions is being called into question by Members of Parliament and the public. That will damage their future business in this country and abroad.

What of the fund management companies which lent shares, often registered with pension fund ownership marked clearly on the share certificates, back to Mr. Maxwell on the signature of Kevin Maxwell? About £38·5 million and £11·5 million respectively were removed from Capel Cure Myers and Invesco MIM fund management by complex stock lending fiddles involving the Maxwells, and again without the authorisation or knowledge of the pension fund trustees. Those investment houses must make good that shortfall, and soon. We should make it clear that those banks and investment institutions that hold back until the matter goes to court will not be popular, and I hope that that is an understatement.

I wish to make two brief points about Liechtenstein and the other tax havens. How can the Government go on allowing tax havens such as Liechtenstein to help in robbing our citizens? In the past 10 years, at least nine Department of Trade and Industry investigations have found fraud or wrongdoing and have named Switzerland or Liechtenstein. When will the Government act to prevent that from happening again? The Treasury and the

[Mr. David Shaw]

Department of Trade and Industry must surely be at risk of being accused of negligence if they do not take action to protect our citizens from Liechtenstein and other tax havens which are robbing many of our citizens.

I have been told by the DTI that the Financial Services Act 1986 powers to trace and recover assets cannot be used in Liechtenstein or even outside the United Kingdom. That is not good enough. We must have changes to make sure that we have the powers to do so.

The motion implies that the Government are to blame. That is clearly wrong. So far, there is no evidence to suggest that the DTI wrongly licensed LBI in 1988, although, of course, there is an argument that the legislation that allowed LBI to be registered was inadequate, but that legislation was supported by three Labour Governments. If anyone is to blame, it is a number of close Labour party friends who were responsible for pensioners' money. Indeed, one man in the House of Lords is sitting on £0·5 million of pensioners' assets.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is out of order to criticise a Member of the House of Lords.

Mr. Shaw: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I withdraw any comment about the member of the House of Lords, other than the fact that I hope that any man who benefited to the tune of £0·5 million from LBI would want to repay that money as soon as possible.

I am disappointed also to know that, apparently, the Serious Fraud Office may yet have to go through another 12 months' work before charges might be brought. I hope that Ministers will ensure that the Serious Fraud Office has every possible support to bring early charges. We must find a better way of bringing to justice people who have taken pensioners' money by criminal acts.

Although responsibility for the Maxwell affair must rest with the financial institutions, the Government have a role. They must protect the small man against the big institutions which, in this case, acted out of self-interest and not their real customers' interest. Ultimately, the Government must ensure that no Maxwell pensioner loses his home or goes hungry through the failings of our financial institutions.

9.8 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): We have been privileged to hear remarkable maiden speeches by my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms. Anderson) and by the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald). I am sure that the House will want to hear from them again very soon.

Before I came to the House, I worked as a printer on the Maxwell publications, although that was before Maxwell owned them. As a result, I know a large number of Maxwell pensioners. I worked with them, and I know them to be honest, decent, responsible and prudent people who always paid in for their pensions. They regarded their pensions as their most important and valuable asset, perhaps after their house—the foundation of their lives in retirement. They put their trust in the pensions industry and the financial houses. After all, the financial houses were all led by people who were Sirs or Lords, people who were always mentioned in the honours list. The employees thought that they lived in a law-governed society. All the firms were licensed by the Government and therefore they thought that their pensions were as safe as the Bank of England.

Then came along Mr. Maxwell. He took over companies such as the Mirror Group and others. There was immediate fear and unease among members of pension schemes. I received a deputation in the House from the *Daily Mirror* led by Mr. Joe Lynch, who told me that Maxwell was taking over the *Daily Mirror* only to get his hands on the pension fund. He told me that if Mr. Maxwell could get the pension fund, which was worth about £500 million, he would get the *Daily Mirror* for nothing. I was told by the workers in that firm that that was what it was all about.

The members of the deputation asked me what protection they had in law. I am not an expert in the law but I looked into the matter. It seemed to me that they had precious little protection. In Britain the protection of the law for pension funds is inadequate.

I arranged a meeting for the *Daily Mirror* employees with my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) who at that time was Opposition Front-Bench spokesman on the subject. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the changes that a Labour Government would need to make. Unfortunately, the Labour Government was not to be.

The first thing that Maxwell did when he went into the Mirror Group was to arrange a pensions holiday. He stopped paying any money into the pension fund. He was interested only in taking money out. Of course, he then took over many other firms and their pension funds and systematically robbed them. Can the House imagine and understand the pain, anguish, suffering and misery of the law-abiding citizens who had done everything right, acted prudently and religiously paid in their moneys only to find that their greatest asset, rightfully theirs, the foundation of their future life, had been stolen? They were robbed not by a burglar with a mask but by the chairmen of companies and City gents. The Maxwell pensioners came to me and asked how it was possible in this country of ours that such a thing could happen under the law and under the rules of the City.

We in the House must start asking ourselves a few questions about banks. I believe that the banks are serving us badly. They are letting us down. We all used to believe that the banks gave us great benefits in terms of the balance of payments. We believed that we gained great benefit from the City and its invisible exports. We were all in awe of the City. We are no longer. The City and its short-termism is perhaps the major cause of our problems. It makes one appalling mistake after another with our money.

For example, when the Reichmann brothers got off the aeroplane, the banks immediately offered them bundles and bundles of used fivers and tenners. Now the firm has gone bust. The same thing happened with Maxwell. A Department of Trade and Industry report said that he was not a fit man to run a company. Yet the banks of this country fell over themselves to give him large loans. Did not they understand what sort of man they were dealing with? Did they know what day of the week it was?

The banks took the pension assets as collateral. Were they naive? Were they born yesterday? Did the banks, the people whom we have always been told to look up to, have the slightest clue what they were doing? They got it madly wrong. If the banks got it madly wrong, it is down to them.

It is their fault. They are now in possession of stolen property. They have the pension assets which were stolen. What do other people do when they have stolen property? If you or I had stolen property, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what would we have to do? We must say that Parliament expects the banks to hand back that stolen property. Yesterday, both Opposition and Conservative Members and in particular the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) made that point.

The second matter that my old workmates, the Maxwell pensioners, drew to my attention was that the Maxwell empire appears to be bust, as it has no money to pay them. In that case, they ask, how can the Maxwell family have such a lavish, millionaire lifestyle? Someone said that the Maxwell brothers are allowed £1,600 per week—I had thought that it was £1,500. We have heard about their large and expensive houses. I have been asked how that is possible or justifiable if there is no money. I do not know. Perhaps we shall find out this evening.

Maxwell was not alone—it was not possible for one man to commit such crimes—but was aided and abetted by many professional people in the City and elsewhere. What about the law? I have been asked whether it is legal to do that sort of thing. What will happen to all those people who aided and abetted him? Why have there been no prosecutions and no convictions? Why have all the crooks and criminals so far gone scot-free?

The Maxwell brothers did not answer the questions when they were brought before the Select Committee. Their expensive lawyers said that they did not answer because they were liable to prosecution, but where are the prosecutions? There have not been any. Why not? If there are not to be any, the brothers should be brought back before the Select Committee and the House so that we can deal with them.

The last question that my old workmates asked me concerns the regulatory structure. They think that they live in a law-governed society. They asked how it could happen. We have laws and regulatory authorities, but it is clear that those authorities have proved totally inadequate.

The Department of Trade and Industry issued a licence, under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958, to London and Bishopsgate Investments' management—a Maxwell company—on 26 April 1988. It is true that Robert Maxwell was not originally a director, but Kevin Maxwell was and everybody knew it. Could the DTI not have put two and two together? Is that asking too much? Did it not understand that Kevin Maxwell did everything that his father told him and was not an independent person? Why did the DTI not look into a company in which Kevin Maxwell was a director? Three days later, on 29 April, IMRO, gave its approval and shortly after Robert Maxwell lent his name to the company.

The sole purpose of London and Bishopsgate Investments and its sister company was to divert £500 million of pension money into untouchable Liechtenstein accounts—to rob the pension funds of their money.

What is the truth that the House must cope with and explain to the pensioners? The DTI and IMRO granted a licence to plunder and pillage the pension funds of thousands of innocent people. The authorities were culpable and negligent and the pensioners were victims not only of fraud but of the official regulatory bodies which failed to protect them. The analogy has been made with Barlow Clowes. It was explained in that case that the authorities were negligent, and the Government put up £160 million to rescue them, although investors in that company knowingly invested offshore for a higher dividend and were taking a risk. The pensioners in the Maxwell empire took no risks. They were honourable and innocent. They were the misused victims of negligence and crime. Whoever should pay, it should not be the pensioners.

After many months, the Government—at long last, tardily, reluctantly, as a result of the pressure of the lobby that we saw yesterday and this debate—have accepted some responsibility. They have realised that they cannot pass by on the other side, but their promise of £2·5 million is inadequate. The fears and the worries of the pensioners whom I met yesterday have not been assuaged. The Government should underwrite the pensions. They should ensure that pensioners get 100 per cent. of that to which they are entitled. However, this should not be achieved solely through the use of taxpayers' money. They should get the cash from the Maxwell companies, from the banks and from the £300 billion-rich pension industry, all of which ought to pick up the tab. There should be some convictions. People should be punished for these crimes, which were committed by others besides Maxwell. What the Government have done so far is inadequate.

9.21 pm

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I shall be brief because I know that others wish to contribute to the debate, but I must begin by adding to the congratulations on the two maiden speeches, which were first class both in brevity, bearing in mind the pressure of the debate, and in substance. I was particularly pleased to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) refer to his predecessor, Sir Ian Stewart, as he was a good friend of mine. As my hon. Friend said, he has a good reputation to maintain.

We are debating an exceptional fraud. Maxwell appeared as a character larger than life to all who knew him and to all who knew of him. In death he has turned out to be a criminal of quite staggering proportions, a man without scruple, determined to the end to get his own way whatever the cost to anyone else.

The members of his family still have the opportunity to recover something of their shattered reputation by co-operating with the investigation to recover the stolen assets of these pension funds. They should do so now. The country has had enough of their blocking tactics, and so has Parliament. As many hon. Members have said in this debate tonight, we must also take into account the advisers to the Maxwells and the many others who were involved and should be assisting in the restitution of these funds, instead of keeping their heads down and avoiding the difficulties that they should face.

I have a number of Maxwell pensioners in my constituency and I speak for them today, but I have a broader interest in the good standing of all company pension funds and the good name of the City of London, where I worked in the personnel field for many years. Employers usually have no option but to contribute to their company funds and all of us would regard a company's contributions to its employees' pension funds as part of a total earnings package, part of the contract of employment. That is exactly what it is.

[Mr. Mark Wolfson]

No reasonable person can possibly disagree with the contention that the Maxwell pensioners are the innocent victims of a massive fraud and if ever individuals deserved to have a wrong fully righted, it is these men and women. Righting of the wrong must involve several sources—all have a part to play.

I welcome the Government's initiative. It is essential, it is timely and it deals with the immediate difficulties. Yesterday my right hon. Friend gave the news to the House in the expectation that—he confirmed this today—it would meet the immediate needs of all pensioners. If it does not meet that expectation, I must tell my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench that many hon. Members from both sides of the House will ask for more. As of now, I am satisfied with the action as a first step.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said yesterday that the amount provided was derisory, but I cannot agree with that. He was considering the sum against the total figure, not against the immediate needs that it is designed to meet. The Secretary of State has confirmed today, in a key phrase, that the objective of the immediate rescue package is that the funds should be able to resume or maintain payment to their members.

I also welcome the decision to set up a special unit. However, will the number and quality of people working in that unit be adequate? Will they have the necessary clout to give Government weight to solving and investigating the problems? They will be dealing with many heavyweight people, who will not readily forward the information that they should. Therefore, it is important that the unit has strong personnel.

I agree with the point that has been made many times in the debate that those banks—we must not include all banks in such strictures—that lent to Maxwell against the assets of his pension funds have a clear moral, as well as a legal, obligation. Further to the moral obligation, I pick up the point made by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) who focused on the business standing of those banks. Surely good banking judgment is about making sure that the assets against which one lends are sound. In the Maxwell case, the assets have been found not only to be unsound, but stolen. Therefore, the banks involved remain as shining examples of bad bankers to all the world. It is in those banks' interests to return the funds as rapidly as possible. We look to them to take that action.

I believe that it is absolutely proper for the Secretary of State to set up a fund to accept contributions to help deal with the problem of the pensioners. I look to the pension industry, which has no insurance system at this stage, to give serious consideration to whether it should ensure its future standing and the sense of security of members of pension funds all over Britain by making some contribution to meet the shortfall.

Certainly, the review of pension schemes is essential. I do not disagree with the time limit of a year. We always knew that, whenever such a review took place, it would be complicated and would require a great amount of consultation. However, the review should take no longer than a year. I welcome the statement of the Secretary of State today that he will act upon some of the urgent recommendations that may be part of the review before the end of that year.

We live in a capitalist society. The takeover of companies always causes major worries for their employees. The Maxwell example has shown that a takeover can put the soundest of pension schemes at extreme risk. Therefore, the whole business of takeovers, when linked to that type of example, is put into a bad light. So the City as a whole—the regulatory bodies, the Bank of England, the banks involved and the pensions industry—has a strong moral obligation as well as self-interest to see the Maxwell pensioners right in the long term.

9.30 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I am grateful for this opportunity to take part in the debate, and I promise not to exceed the time allocated for speeches. As a member of the Select Committee on Social Security in the last Parliament, I shall make only a few points and not go over those made by other hon. Members. If the House is seized of the matters which deserve urgent action, some early decisions must be taken.

I congratulate the occupants of the Opposition Front Bench, because without the motion the Government would not have provided time to debate this and interrelated issues. The Government should have agreed some time ago, because of the seriousness of the matter, to provide time for a wide-ranging debate. It should not have been left to the Opposition to find time for what must be inadequate consideration of this important matter.

The Secretary of State paid credit yesterday and today to the work of the Select Committee. I do not say that just because I was a member of it. Members of the Committee from both sides agreed when we discussed the case that our recommendations would be driven by the evidence that we collated, and by no other means. So our recommendations present the Government with an ideal method of dealing with the issue in the short and long term.

The Government business managers should give a clear assurance at business questions this week that time will be provided before the summer recess to debate the Select Committee's report. It contains five pages of recommendations, yet the Secretary of State has to date accepted only one recommendation. If he is really serious about doing something over the scandal, for the pensions industry and for the future security of pensioners, he will ensure that the House has ample opportunity to debate those five pages of recommendations.

Both Front Benches must give urgent consideration to the fact that the Select Committee on Social Security will not be re-established before the summer recess. Only by reconstituting it will there be adequate opportunity to debate all the issues. If its re-establishment is delayed until the autumn, it will take until March of next year before the Committee continues to deal with the issues that were before it prior to the general election.

That is an unsatisfactory state of affairs, and the business managers on both sides must explain why the appropriate orders for the establishment of the Select Committee have not been laid before the House. It is not good enough to say that it must wait until after the shadow Cabinet election or other matters relating to Opposition business have been settled. The work of the Select Committee is too important to be left to the indecision of business managers. I hope that, without delay, orders will be placed before the House to enable the Committee to start its work before the summer recess.

Mr. David Shaw *rose*——

Mr. McCartney: I will not give way because I have only a few minutes in which to speak. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will have ample opportunity to speak on the subject in the Select Committee before the summer recess.

I have a suggestion for the Government if they think that my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) was churlish in his remarks about their lifebelt proposals. There was almost unanimous support from both sides of the House for the principle set out in the Minister's statement. I am not prepared to say something in private to the Select Committee and then stand on the Back Benches in public and say something different. The concepts contained in the Minister's statement yesterday were the very concepts that were unanimously agreed by the Select Committee. I stand by that.

However, doubt is being expressed both inside and outside the House about the adequacy of the proposals. So far, the debate has shown good will to the Select Committee and the all-party group, and I suggest that arrangements are made for regular contact between both Front Benches and the all-party group to take cognisance of whether it will be necessary at some stage to provide further resources. The Minister could then have no objection to the involvement of the Opposition Front Bench in considering the adequacy of the proposals put forward yesterday.

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): Does my hon. Friend agree with me that the Government's offer yesterday was regarded as derisory because it amounted to little more than the loan of "half a Gazza" when Maxwell pensioners' demands were for the whole of the Lazio team? Many of the Maxwell pensioners see the only prospect of getting those funds through the strategy set down in the early-day motion that I submitted today, which asks the Government

"to use its full powers of sequestration against the banks, investment institutions, individuals and foreign-based companies to recover all the monies stolen from the Maxwell pensioners".

If the Government would not hesitate to do so against the miners in 1984, they should not hesitate to do so against the bankers today.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend makes a powerful point. That is why I have been arguing that the House should make time to debate the consequences of the Select Committee report and should make regulations to allow that Committee's work to continue. Before the general election we were considering how we could provide for the return of the assets and deal with the difficulties of international law in returning assets from Liechtenstein and other places. The Select Committee must be allowed to continue that work.

The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) was being rather kind, to say the least, to those who came before the Select Committee for IMRO. In reality, they were totally inadequate for the job that they were trying to perform. Moreover, they were inexperienced in the role and work of the City. What was wrong was the self-regulatory basis of IMRO, which was ill-prepared and unprepared to take action at the outset in respect of the Maxwell companies. Had they taken that action, many of the problems that have arisen as a result of the loss of hundreds of millions of pounds of assets would not have arisen.

The Government should, at an early stage, make it clear what Professor Goode has been asked to do in respect of self-regulation. Will his committee look at the wider aspect of the role of IMRO and at whether, under the new arrangements for his committee, the Occupational Pensions Board is adequate to cope with the increasing demands in that growing sector of financial institutions in the City?

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): Does my hon. Friend accept that the IMRO regulations provide for directors of IMRO companies to supply a quarterly return, which they must sign, saying that they know of no failure under the regulations and nothing that could give rise to or constitute a complaint from any customer? As all the directors of IMRO companies, of which I am one, must sign such a document, and as it is filled in every quarter, is it not clear that all the directors of IMRO companies have been signing such documents apparently unaware of the theft from the funds? Does not that mean that self-regulation has failed dismally and that those company directors have been prepared to sign, knowingly or unknowingly? May I show a Christmas card that Robert Maxwell——

Madam Speaker: Order. Let me try to help the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell). An intervention must be precise, particularly at this time of the evening when we are waiting for the wind-up speeches.

Mr. Gunnell: My apologies, Madam Speaker, but I thought that the card was a precise example of hypocrisy on a major scale.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) had me there, and I shall keep a close eye on him in future debates. His suggestion to look at the Select Committee report and what it says about IMRO is valid.

I want a commitment from both the Labour and the Government Front-Bench teams that they will initiate, in Government time, a debate on the Social Security Committee's report and regulations and will set up a Select Committee before the summer recess.

9.41 pm

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): I congratulate the two hon. Members who made excellent maiden speeches. The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) gave a clear and precise presentation that demonstrated his barrister background. Having listened to his maiden speech, I think that his experience of Speakers' corner will come in useful, as he will not be heard in as much silence as he was today. My hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms. Anderson) gave a clear, fluent, committed speech. As many of us know, she has worked hard for many Members of Parliament and for the Labour party behind the scenes for many years. We are pleased to see her here in her own right; our party's loss is her constituents' gain.

In view of the time left, I shall briefly pick up on a number of issues raised, starting with one mentioned by the Secretary of State. He said that he was convinced that his proposals had been welcomed by a wide spectrum of opinion outside the House. Let us consider the response of some of the action groups to his comments.

The Maxwell pensioners action group said:

[Ms. Marjorie Mowlam]

"It's a long way short of what we want, and we shall campaign on."

The BIH pensioners action committee said:

"The £2·5 million was a little like a student loan ie. giving a little to people with nothing—hoping they would be repaid in the future."

The MCC works plan said that it was

"A step up the ladder, a scratch on the surface."

It is worried about the frequency with which the Secretary of State used the word "may". Therefore, to say that the proposals were greeted with overwhelming approval is a slight overstatement.

I wish to concentrate on the issue on which the Secretary of State laid stress: the special unit that he has set up in his Department, and the trust fund designed to encourage City institutions to contribute to the Maxwell pensioners' funds. He said a number of times, both yesterday and today, that the long-term problems could be solved only if assets were unfrozen and other contributions were made. He said that he was waiting to see how the institutions in the City of London reacted to their moral conscience.

I tried to help the Secretary of State this afternoon by phoning around as many financial institutions in the City as I could to find out where they stood on the issue. I am pleased to be able to help him with a number of comments from those institutions. The chairman of one of the clearing banks said:

"The failure in the system is the failure to control a government-regulated company—Bishopsgate. As far as we know—no stolen shares passed through our hands—we find the suggestion of a moral obligation to pay worrying. A way has to be found to recompense the pensioners, but for us, charity begins at home."

The chairman of another clearing bank said:

"We are squeaky clean on Maxwell".

When asked about whether he would contribute to the Secretary of State's fund, the chairman said:

"That's going a bit far. I don't think my shareholders would appreciate that."

The National Association of Pension Funds, an organisation which represents many pension funds throughout the country, states that it has no money and does not believe that it should contribute. When asked whether it would advise pension fund members to contribute at its council meeting tomorrow, its representatives said that it did not consider that relevant. The Secretary of State must be aware that it would be ultra vires, in terms of the fiduciary principle, for many pension schemes to contribute to his pension fund.

The Secretary of State has not received a positive response from European and American banks that hold collateral linked to the Maxwell pensioners. When asked whether it would contribute, Shearson Lehman representatives said:

"We entered into transactions in good faith. We intend to pursue our own position in the courts."

Most of the other banks were not willing to talk about conscience. Banque Nationale de Paris had no comment and Credit Suisse and Swiss Volksbank were unable under Swiss law to make any statement.

I spoke to people in Goldman Sachs and other banks in the United States. Those bankers consider themselves to be people of good will, but they do not consider a statement in support of the trust fund to be of any value. One of them said:

"I don't know what kind of show you are running over there. Every time the Government runs into a regulatory problem they come round the City with a begging bowl."

We accept that the banks have a responsibility and we would like to see them contribute. How do the Government propose to bring alive the small conscience in the City institutions?

Mr. Lilley *rose——*

Ms. Mowlam: The Secretary of State had a good session. There will be plenty of time to sum up and the right hon. Gentleman can confer with his colleague. I will not give way. The Minister can share his view with his colleague who can present it in winding up.

The hon. Members for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) and for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) spoke about the future of the City of London. If the European federal bank comes to London, will it have to worry about the begging bowl every time there is a problem? I agree with the hon. Member for Sevenoaks that we must consider that serious problem.

The Secretary of State generously acknowledged that the Select Committee and the all-party group had been crucial in helping him to reach his decision. It would have been helpful if he had said that the idea for this kind of fund had been circulating in the City for many weeks and openly discussed. As I am sure he knows from the report in yesterday's issue of *The Independent*, the National Westminster bank has been discussing for some time what it calls a men of good will fund—to which we shall not have to contribute—to help pensioners in great distress until the legal question about a call on shares is answered. The head of the bank's risk department has been exploring avenues for some time in trying to respond to the problem, and the National Westminster felt fairly aggrieved when the Secretary of State found out and decided to pre-empt the scheme.

The Secretary of State said several times that he wanted to put Maxwell pensioners' minds at rest and then made contradictory statements. When asked by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) about retrospective payments for members of the Headington pension fund, the Secretary of State said that he would have to come back to the hon. Gentleman. But in answer to the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) the Secretary of State gave a 100 per cent. guarantee about all the pensioners in that scheme. That can be checked in tomorow's *Hansard*.

In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson), who asked about AGB pensioners, the Secretary of State gave no guarantee and no straight answer. The right hon. Gentleman's statements have not created the peace of mind that he and the Opposition are eager to welcome. In many ways, he has done the opposite. As my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) made clear, we welcome the changes to section 58B of the Social Security Act 1990. As the Minister made clear, that will make the Maxwell pensioners unsecured creditors. We must be straight with the Maxwell pensioners and tell them that, as unsecured creditors, they will be similar to other trading partners and will receive very little, if any, money from the liquidation.

The Secretary of State was asked yesterday when he would introduce the social security changes and he said, "I shall do that at an early date." What did he mean? When he was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry he could

have set up the inquiry into MGN, but we had to wait for the present Secretary of State to announce that inquiry. Understandably we have some doubt about the right hon. Gentleman's ability to act quickly on announcements.

One would have thought that the problem over the Maxwell pensioners would have stimulated the Government into responding to weaknesses in the regulatory regime. Many hon. Members have spoken about that. I hope that that issue, which relates to the Treasury, will be answered in the winding-up speech. The Government have said that they will not respond to the issue other than through the review of pension legislation. Hon. Members have spoken about IMRO, international controls and Liechtenstein. All those matters deserve an international response. Yesterday, the Chancellor of the Exchequer issued a press release on the Treasury taking over responsibility for the Financial Services Act 1986. It said that for the time being

"No changes are proposed in the way financial services are to be regulated."

We have £270 million in Liechtenstein and it would be useful if that was returned. After the events at the Bank of Credit and Commerce International and following other procedures, it would be useful if the Government acknowledged that it would be helpful to have an international response. Perhaps the Minister will mention that today.

Similarly, there is a report on IMRO on the desk of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The report states that in future IMRO should move to a one wholesale and one retail regulator. That report has been on his desk for some months, but there has been no response to the weaknesses at IMRO. I hope that the Minister will accept that that report suggests changes and that it is something to which the Government could respond. That would be better than the Chancellor's statement that no action is to be taken.

The position of the Maxwell pensioners is pitiable. Although we welcome the Government's response, it is insufficient and we are worried that in the months ahead the Maxwell pensioners will suffer as a result of the Government's weakness.

9.51 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): During this debate the House has spoken with one voice about the plight of the Maxwell pensioners. Nobody listening to the debate could go away unaware of the great sympathy that has been expressed by all hon. Members who have contributed and those who have tried to contribute. I hope that they will have other opportunities to express their views.

One aspect of the plight of Maxwell pensioners that has been given insufficient attention is the uncertainty involved. They are worried not just about the amount of money involved but about when and whether they will get it. For many elderly people of limited means and with an expected standard of life, that uncertainty keeps them awake at night and visits a particular sort of distress upon them. I am aware of that and it is the Government's awareness of that which led to the proposal that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made yesterday and again today. In the short time available, I shall do my best to acknowledge and respond to the many contributions that have been made.

I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) on an outstanding maiden speech in the great tradition of the House. He spoke with warmth about his predecessor, Sir Ian Stewart, whom we all remember with gratitude and admiration. He mentioned the plight of his AGB pensioner constituents and I took that on board. They will be among those whom it is intended will benefit from this package of measures. He made some interesting points about the remit of the review. He proposed that consideration should be given to a register of assets and that perhaps a compensation scheme was needed. He and other hon. Members rightly pointed out that 12 months is probably an adequate period given that the Government will come forward sooner if more immediate measures are needed. We must remember that we are dealing with an enormous number of beneficiaries of occupational pension schemes and it is important that we get it right.

When in the past the House has looked at the problems in pensions, insurance, investments and banking, time and again we have looked at the deficiencies of past legislation and the latest incidence of collapse. What we must try to do—it is more difficult—is look forward to the next problem that might arise. We should spend more time trying to secure the horses in their stable than locking the doors of those that have already bolted. As I have said, that is difficult, but it will take the time and attention of the review.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) supported the amendment, for which I am grateful. He deplored the party-political stance of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who, I agree, introduced an unnecessary partisan approach.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) welcomed the review and asked, rightly, how funds could be diverted so badly. The review must consider that, and the banks and City institutions must contribute to the trust fund that has been set up.

The hon. Member for Gordon and others referred to the problem of British International Helicopters Limited scheme members. To date, all pensions have been paid in full and will be until the end of July. Money is available to pay after July, and the unit will discuss with trustees how to continue pensions in the short term.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms. Anderson) on an outstanding maiden speech. She spoke warmly about our colleague, Sir David Trippier, whom we miss very much, but we welcome her to the House. I was impressed by her comments about textile workers, whom I know something about. She mentioned the problems and concern of her constituents who are affected by the Maxwell collapses and called for an assessment—this is an important point—of trust law and pension law. That was considered by the professor to whom she referred, but I did not draw the same conclusions from the report as her. She spelt out the case for a statutory compensation scheme.

My hon. Friends the Members for Dover (Mr. Shaw) and for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) spoke about Headington. It is intended that the package of £2·5 million will restore payments, including the May and June payments, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West asked. The trustees must decide how to allocate resources, but he asked whether, in assessing the

[Mr. Anthony Nelson]

sum liable to be paid, they included an assessment for back payments of sums due. The answer is that we intend, as far as possible, that they should.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dover also spoke about the problems of getting assets out of Liechtenstein. I share his frustration, but there is a limited amount that one can do to make another sovereign state disgorge assets. However, there is a prospect that, under the Basle negotiations on international banking regulation, countries that do not subscribe to international standards of banking prudence may have authorisation withdrawn for subsidiaries or branches in particular countries, so some pressure could be brought to bear in that way. He asked for a tougher line to be taken, and I am sure that that will be noted.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) asked whether the banks knew with whom they were dealing and referred to the 1971 Department of Trade and Industry report. Many of them must have known, although with the benefit of hindsight it is easy to be critical. He asked whether the Maxwells will be prosecuted. That is a matter for the Serious Fraud Office. The assets are a matter for the liquidators, who are investigating. He said that the Department of Trade and Industry should not have licensed LBI, but under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958 it was extremely difficult for it to be denied approval, even for those few days.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) welcomed the assurances that have been given, but said that if funds proved inadequate he and the House would be back for more. We hope that they will be adequate. I assure him that the manning of the unit will be adequate. We shall ensure that it is staffed with people who are thoroughly able to do the job. I noted what he said about pension funds and banks contributing to the trust that has been set up.

The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) referred to the report of the Select Committee on Social Security. I pay tribute to its work. Its central recommendation was that there should be a review, and that recommendation has been accepted in full. I believe that there were about 60 recommendations, six of which were implemented immediately. It is the Government's intention to respond formally to the Select Committee by the end of this month. The hon. Gentleman criticised IMRO and asked whether it was competent, but that is a matter for SIB.

Finally, the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) did not get much change out of the City, which is hardly surprising—it is hardly likely to say to her, "What a good idea. I'll certainly put £5 million into the kitty." These issues are very sensitive. *[Interruption.]* Well, it is not going to say that. I predict that we shall have a much better success rate.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland) *rose in his place, and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 262, Noes 315.

Division No. 26] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Enright, Derek
Adams, Mrs Irene	Etherington, William
Ainger, Nicholas	Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*	Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Allen, Graham	Fatchett, Derek
Alton, David	Faulds, Andrew
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Armstrong, Hilary	Fisher, Mark
Ashton, Joe	Flynn, Paul
Austin-Walker, John	Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Barnes, Harry	Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Battle, John	Foulkes, George
Bayley, Hugh	Fraser, John
Beckett, Margaret	Fyfe, Maria
Bell, Stuart	Galbraith, Sam
Bennett, Andrew F.	Galloway, George
Benton, Joe	Gapes, Michael
Bermingham, Gerald	George, Bruce
Berry, Roger	Gerrard, Neil
Betts, Clive	Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Blair, Tony	Godman, Dr Norman A.
Blunkett, David	Godsiff, Roger
Boateng, Paul	Gordon, Mildred
Boyce, Jimmy	Graham, Thomas
Boyes, Roland	Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Bradley, Keith	Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Grocott, Bruce
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*	Gunnell, John
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*	Hain, Peter
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Hall, Mike
Burden, Richard	Hanson, David
Byers, Stephen	Hardy, Peter
Caborn, Richard	Harman, Ms Harriet
Callaghan, Jim	Harvey, Nick
Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)*	Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Heppell, John
Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)*	Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Hinchliffe, David
Canavan, Dennis	Hoey, Kate
Cann, James	Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*	Home Robertson, John
Chisholm, Malcolm	Hood, Jimmy
Clapham, Michael	Hoon, Geoff
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*	Hoyle, Doug
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*	Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Clelland, David	Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Coffey, Ms Ann	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Cohen, Harry	Hutton, John
Connarty, Michael	Illsley, Eric
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*	Ingram, Adam
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*	Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Corbyn, Jeremy	Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Corston, Ms Jean	Jamieson, David
Cousins, Jim	Janner, Greville
Cox, Tom	Johnston, Sir Russell
Cryer, Bob	Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Cummings, John	Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*	Jones, Ms Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*	Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Dafis, Cynog	Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Dalyell, Tam	Jowell, Ms Tessa
Darling, Alistair	Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*	Keen, Alan
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*	Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*	Khabra, Piara
Denham, John	Kilfoyle, Peter
Dewar, Donald	Kirkwood, Archy
Dixon, Don	Leighton, Ron
Dobson, Frank	Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Donohoe, Brian	Lewis, Terry
Dowd, Jim	Litherland, Robert
Dunnachie, Jimmy	Livingstone, Ken
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Eagle, Ms Angela	Loyden, Eddie

Lynne, Ms Liz
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MADAM SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House shares a deep concern for the distress pensioners face as a result of the pillaging of pension funds by Robert Maxwell; applauds the initiative taken by the Government to provide temporary, emergency funding to help those schemes which have a particularly acute short term problem; and, while welcoming the decision to initiate a thorough review of the framework of pension scheme law, notes with approval the important part that occupational pensions continue to play in ensuring increasing prosperity among the retired population of this country.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Motion in the name of Mr. Tony Newton relating to the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

10.15 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, relating to Standing Order No. 130 on Select Committees. I raise the matter because it has become clear to hon. Members on both sides— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber do so quietly and not hold their meetings here? *[Interruption.]* Order. An hon. Member is on his feet.

Mr. McCartney: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for standing up for the little people in the House.

Madam Speaker: Order. They may be small people, but there is a lot of personality there.

Mr. McCartney: I am lost for words, Madam Speaker —for once.

Standing Order No. 130 relates to the setting up of Select Committees. It has become clear to hon. Members on both sides who served on Select Committees in the previous Parliament, in particular Committees whose current investigations were suspended because of the general election, that no effort has been made by the authorities of the House, through the usual channels, to bring forward appropriate measures for those Select Committees to be set up. In particular, the Social Services Select Committee has been left in limbo while people laugh all the way to Liechtenstein with people's resources from the Maxwell pension funds. I ask you, Madam Speaker, to use your good offices in the appropriate quarters to bring before the House orders for that Select Committee to be set up before the summer recess.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must seek that information from the Committee of Selection and not from the Chair.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I hope that Front-Bench Members heard Opposition support for the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney).

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I wonder whether you would do your best to draw to the attention of Front-Bench Members the answer which I received today to my question on the cost to public funds of members of the Department of the Clerk of the House who currently have nothing to do because the departmental Select Committees have not been set-up. The cost of the Clerks is £175,862 a month. If the departmental Select Committees are not set up until October, the cost to public funds in the Clerk's Department will, by my calculation, be more than £1 million.

Madam Speaker: I protect Back Benchers as much as I protect Officers of the House who cannot answer for themselves. I am using my good offices to see that progress

is made in setting up the Select Committees. I am sure that what I have said has been heard in all quarters of the House and especially on the two Front Benches.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not prolonging the point of order unnecessarily. Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Ross: As you are using your good offices to ensure that the Select Committees are set up, will you go further and ensure that there is a Select Committee for Northern Ireland?

Madam Speaker: I have gone as far as I intend to go this evening. We now move on to the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill.

Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill

10.21 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): I beg to move,

That, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 86 (Nomination of standing committees), any Standing Committee appointed for the consideration of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill shall consist of twenty Members, including not fewer than twelve Members sitting for constituencies in Wales.

Inevitably, this is a narrow debate. It is not about the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill. It is about the consideration of the Bill, for the motion is purely procedural. As Standing Order No. 86 is referred to in the motion, it may be helpful to give a brief outline of its main requirements.

With certain exceptions, Standing Order No. 86 requires that

"the Committee of Selection shall nominate not fewer than sixteen nor more than fifty Members to serve on each standing committee for the consideration of each bill".

It requires the Committee of Selection to have regard to

"the qualifications of those Members nominated and to the composition of the House".

There is a further proviso which states:

"for the consideration of any public bill relating exclusively to Wales, the committee shall be so constituted as to include all Members sitting for constituencies in Wales."

There is clearly an inconsistency in the Standing Order. There cannot be a Standing Committee which reflects the composition of the House, is limited to 50 members and is made up of the Members for all constituencies in Wales. A Committee meeting all those requirements has not been constituted for some considerable time, irrespective of the party in power. Hon. Members will be interested to know that the Welsh Language Act 1967, the Welsh Development Agency Act 1975, the Development of Rural Wales Act 1976, the Conwy Tunnel (Supplementary Powers) Act 1983 and the Caldey Island Act 1990 all had Standing Committee membership other than as specified in Standing Order No. 86.

In turn, none of the motions to set up the membership of those Standing Committees, which were similar to the one that we are considering this evening, was opposed. I suspect that the only reason why the Standing Order has not been amended is the relative infrequency of legislation that relates exclusively to Wales.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): The Minister has quoted precedents to the House. When did a private Bill last become a public Bill?

Mr. Jones: We are dealing with the motion before the House. Proceedings on the Bill have gone on for a long time. I should be out of order if I strayed into considering the Bill itself. Many of us feel that the Bill has been more debated than anything else. I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that we confine ourselves to the procedural motion.

The Government are doing what has often been done before by tabling the motion.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Minister is misleading the House.

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will retract what he has just said and rephrase his comments.

Mr. Rogers: The Minister is inadvertently misleading the House.

Madam Speaker: Order. It is perfectly all right to use the word inadvertently.

Mr. Rogers: He is inadvertently misleading the House. The Bill has never been discussed, as it is a new Government Bill which has been introduced to replace a private Bill. The Minister is correct in saying that the issues have been discussed fairly well, but the Bill is new.

Madam Speaker: That does not seem to be a point of order for me. This is a technical motion relating to a Standing Order.

Mr. Jones: By tabling the motion, the Government are merely doing what has often been done before.

The motion will allow the Committee of Selection to nominate a Standing Committee on the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill which reflects the composition of the House and ensures substantial representation by Members with Welsh constituencies. Of course, it remains for the House to decide what it will do on future occasions.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): The Minister has quoted several precedents. Will he confirm that there is an important difference between them and the situation that we face tonight? In the precedents that he quoted, a Labour Government altered the order to facilitate the position for a Conservative Opposition. Tonight, a Conservative Government are disadvantaging the Labour Opposition.

Mr. Jones: No, I think that the right hon. Gentleman will find that that is not correct. If he refers back to all the examples from 1967 to the present, he will find that those in 1983 and 1990 were under a Conservative Government. I also remind the right hon. Gentleman that none of the motions involved in setting up the Committee stages in those examples was opposed.

I commend the motion to the House.

10.26 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): In April 1907, the then President of the Board of Education, and my direct predecessor as Member for Torfaen, Mr. Reginald McKenna, spoke in the House on behalf of the Government and in support of Standing Order No. 86, which the Government, in their arrogance, are proposing to abandon. The House believed 85 years ago—and made that belief resolute by a Division—that Welsh Members should have the same rights and privileges as their Scottish counterparts when dealing with exclusively Welsh legislation. All those years ago Members believed that that argument was right, and we do not believe that it has changed with the passage of time.

It is ironic that only last week the Scottish Grand Committee dealt with the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill, as a move for a greater say by Scottish Members of Parliament in dealing with Scottish legislation.

I believe that the rule has served the test of time. The Minister said that the Standing Order has been set aside on a number of occasions. It was set aside on two occasions under a Labour Government: in June 1975, for the Welsh Development Agency Bill; and in July 1976, for the Development of Rural Wales Bill.

However, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) said, the circumstances then were different. They were completely separate. The move was not challenged. The Welsh Development Agency Bill and the Development of Rural Wales Bill were supported by both sides of the House and both the bodies involved are today regarded as successful agencies by the Government. There was never any question of the Government having to bring in extra troop reinforcements from England to get the legislation through. Wales then, as now, produced more Labour Members than Members of any other party, and there was a Labour Government. Also, the proportion of Welsh Members on the Committees was different from the proportion proposed today. Today, the Government are proposing that, out of 20 members of the Committee, only 12 should be from Welsh constituencies, but in the two cases that I have quoted, 14 out of 16 were Members of Parliament, at a time when many Welsh Members were Ministers in a Labour Government. The comparison is not a good one, and the House should be looking at these matters in a different way.

The Government accept the wider membership of Committees when it suits them. Only two weeks ago, the House dealt with all stages of the Non-Domestic Rating Bill on the Floor of the House. Two years ago, two days were set aside so that what was then the Development Board for Rural Wales Bill could be dealt with by all hon. Members.

I agree with the Minister about one thing. The debate is not whether we are for or against the plan for the Cardiff bay barrage. It is about the principle of changing the Standing Order. However, many of us believe that it is essential that membership of the Committee that scrutinises the details of the Bill is as wide as possible, and includes all Welsh Members of Parliament. That is for one reason, and the reason that makes this example different from those that the Minister gave. It is that the Bill has aroused great controversy among those on both sides of the argument. It is proper that those involved in the debates on the Bill should be able properly to scrutinise its details.

The Bill deals not with any old town but with the capital city of Wales, and inevitably that is of great interest to all Welsh Members. It has serious implications for the environment of the Cardiff bay area, as the Minister, who represents part of Cardiff, knows only too well himself. It is of great interest also to many Welsh Members who do not represent Cardiff, but who have a deep interest in environmental matters. It must be of interest to us all because of the tens of millions of pounds that will be spent out of the public purse on Cardiff bay. If that money is to be spent, the very nature of the spending needs to be scrutinised by all Welsh Members of Parliament.

The reality is that the Government want a small Committee because they are not sure of victory in that forum. The official record of the debate 85 years ago shows that the then Conservative Member of Parliament for Ashford put quite well the case for the Minister today. He said:

"The Members for Wales were generally of the opposite way of thinking to the Unionist Party"—

that is, the Conservative party, and things have not changed too much—

"and it would be impossible for a Unionist Government to entrust legislation to Grand Committees . . . because no

Government would consent to send legislation to Committees on which they were in a minority."—*[Official Report,* 15 April 1907; Vol. 172, c. 671-720.]

That is why the Government wish to change the Standing Order—simply because they cannot guarantee success. Are the Government so unsure of the benefits to the bay? Are they so uncertain of the merits of the Bill that they cannot trust Welsh Members of Parliament to scrutinise the proposals? After all, that is what they are doing. The Second Reading debate, which judged the principles of the Bill, has long since gone. The Committee will deal with safeguards, protections and details, so all Welsh Members should be allowed to take part in the proceedings.

I am glad to see the Secretary of State present because during and before the general election, when he attacked the principle of the Welsh Assembly and devolution, he always said that one of the reasons why it was unnecessary to have a Welsh Assembly in Cardiff was that the procedures and the institutions of the House of Commons were such that they safeguarded the interests of Welsh people. He said that there was nothing better than Welsh Question Time, the setting up of the Welsh Grand Committee and the Welsh day debate. Yet, tonight, the Government want to take away one of the most important parts of the procedure that deals with Welsh business, which has been established for nearly a century. At the same time, however, the Government have conceded that Members representing Scotland should be allowed to deal with local matters in their way. We should be allowed to do the same.

Many of us feel great dismay and unease about the erosion of the democratic process in Wales. By the time of the next election, Wales will have been subjected to two decades of unwanted Tory rule, but in election after election——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Gentleman was kind enough to say that he was quite clear about the meaning of the motion, but he now seems to be straying from it. Will he now address his remarks to the motion?

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope that you will reflect carefully upon this debate, because it is no more than a gerrymander. The Tories cannot get their way with the current procedures, so they are changing them—gerrymandering them—to get their way. I think that the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) were right and in order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his contribution, but he is challenging the Chair. If he wishes to catch my eye, I do not imagine that he will continue on that theme.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sure that, on reflection, you will understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) was not challenging your ruling in any way. I am also sure that my hon. Friend would not regard your latter comment as a threat. It is important to point out that the motion that we accepted at 10 pm allows for the debate to continue until the business is finished. There is no discretion resting in the Chair as to whether my hon. Friend speaks in the debate. I ask you to reflect carefully on your recent comments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has been in the House for about as long as me. He knows full well that many hon. Members wish to speak tonight. They all have to catch my eye and I must use my judgment. I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his earlier comment and I take it in the spirit in which it was made.

Mr. Murphy: The Government want to change the Standing Order and the nature of the way in which Welsh business is dealt with in the Chamber. Many of us believe that that is part of a general process by which the Welsh people have been deprived of their democratic rights. It is important that the proposed change is seen in the wider context of Welsh democracy.

In the next few months the Secretary of State will make great changes to local government in Wales with the result that we shall have fewer elected representatives than we have ever had. We must couple those changes and the motive behind tonight's debate with the fact that many non-elected public bodies in Wales are stuffed with the Secretary of State's placemen. Is it any wonder that Wales is fast becoming the least democratic nation in western Europe?

The Government have the power to impose their will on the House and the Welsh people, but they certainly do not have the right.

10.38 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The motion is totally unacceptable to everyone in Wales who has any feeling for democracy in our country.

The Cardiff barrage is an eminently local issue. First and foremost, it deals with Cardiff, but it has implications for all of Wales because it has implications for the budget of the Welsh Office. Hon. Members representing all parts of Wales have the right to contribute to the arguments that must be pursued when the issue is dealt with in detail. The way in which we deal with Welsh legislation here, under Conservative Governments who have been in power for the last 13 years and who will run for at least another five, shows that it is not possible for us to achieve decisions in line with the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the people of Wales.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): The hon. Gentleman refers to the Conservatives being in power for at least another five years. Is his arithmetic right?

Mr. Wigley: We do not know what the outcome will be at the next general election. Perhaps I should have said that the present Government have a maximum of five years, although one does not know how the rules will be changed—*[Interruption.]* We can only imagine the course that the Government will pursue, considering that they are willing to change the rules in the respect we are discussing tonight, by which they are taking away rights that Welsh hon. Members have had since the beginning of this century.

It is not possible for Wales to expect democracy from this institution by virtue of the procedures that are being followed by the Government in this instance. It is not possible, within the institutions of the House of Commons or, for that matter, of the House of Lords—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must resume their seats when I am standing. May we have a little more hush so that we can hear what the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) is saying?

Mr. Wigley: Clearly, we are all enjoying it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman says that he has no faith in this House. Does he have more faith in the House of Lords, now that it is occupied by, among others, Lord Trawsfynydd B?

Mr. Wigley: When I think of the long row of former Labour Members, ex-Labour candidates and ex-Labour local government leaders in Wales who are in another place, I begin to wonder. Decisions that must be taken at central Government level, especially when legislation is involved, should be taken in line with the wishes of the people of Wales. To the extent that we do not have an all-Wales elected body in which such decisions can be taken, they must be taken through hon. Members here.

There are 38 constituencies in Wales. The Government returned after the last election with six Welsh seats, compared with eight at the 1987 election. Six out of 38 apparently gives them a mandate to rule. What we are seeing with tonight's proposal is the same sort of direction as we see in the context of the Welsh Grand Committee when we debate other issues. That Committee, which handles legislation of this sort when it is passed to it, cannot take any meaningful decisions. We can only report back that we have considered, say, health, education or housing in Wales.

We are not allowed to take a decision because in that body there is, of necessity, a majority of hon. Members who represent parties other than the Government. For the past 120 years we have witnessed in the political body of Wales a situation in which there has never been a majority of Conservative MPs. In some elections, not one Conservative Member has been returned. The 1905 election was a case in point, when Wales was overwhelmingly Liberal. Keir Hardie was then the first Labour Member.

Although there has never been a majority of Conservatives, for two thirds of that time we have been governed by Conservative Governments who have had no mandate from Wales and who have been totally out of line with the social and economic aspirations of the people of Wales.

We may have to suffer that as the price of being part of the United Kingdom. But for local decisions that do not affect any other part of the nation, why is it not possible for us to have a modicum of democracy so that the Welsh people can take decisions in line with the views of their elected representatives in this House? If it is not possible for the House to live with that small degree of rights for the people of Wales, is that not a reflection of the bankruptcy of this system of government in affording any sort of democracy to the people of Wales?

Although the message may not come home in this Government's term of office because they insist on their majority in the United Kingdom, sooner or later the message will come home that the only way for the people of Wales to take decisions on this and other issues that go further, in line with their values and aspirations, will be when we have our own state answerable to the Welsh people and our own Parliament in Cardiff and are not ruled by Conservative Governments in London.

10.45 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing your eye to catch me seeking to contribute to the debate!

Sitting on the Government Benches is the Under-Secretary of State, who scraped by in the last general election with a majority of a few thousand; next to him is the Minister of State, who got 30 per cent. of the vote—two people voted against him for every person who voted for him; and, on his left-hand side is the Secretary of State for Wales, who does not even represent a seat in the Principality. That sums up the state of the Conservative party today.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): Does my hon. Friend agree that 23 Opposition Members elected in Wales, but only two Conservative Members from Wales, are in the Chamber? The Conservative party cannot even muster its four Back Benchers from Wales into the Chamber, yet the 23 Welsh Opposition Members who are interested in this matter are here. Where are the Conservatives?

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend is right. It is amazing that Conservative Members with seats in Wales are not here, yet we see clearly that there is intense interest in this measure from Opposition Members and that there is a full house of Welsh Opposition Members.

The measure is nothing more than a gross gerrymander. It is worse than that, because the Government could have chosen a Committee with an odd number of members and they would then have had a majority of only one. But they have chosen a Committee with an even number of members, thus giving them a majority of two over all other parties. Naturally, the Committee's membership should reflect the membership of the House, so on a Committee of 20 they should not even have a majority of one. Therefore, they have not only been insulting to the people of Wales but have tried to achieve as large a majority in the House as they dare.

During the general election, 50 per cent. of people voted Labour and only 28 per cent. of the Welsh electorate voted Conservative. So the Government have no mandate whatever. They cannot get their Back Benchers from Wales to attend this debate and the Minister makes a perfunctory speech, trying to kid us that the motion is technical and that we should consider nothing but the technicalities. The motion is important because it shows the naked truth of Tory colonial government in the Principality. The Government know well that Welsh Members are intensely interested in what happens in our capital city. This was a private Bill about which the Government took no view either way. But behind the scenes, they wanted the Bill and they have now brought it forward as a Conservative party measure.

The measure may have had the support of hon. Members in Committee—I make no judgment about that. Some of us were against it and others were for it. Some hon. Members had qualms or reservations about parts of it and were prepared to see what we could do to get those parts changed, but were in favour of other parts of it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is not discussing the Bill, is he?

Dr. Marek: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I wanted to be clear that the hon. Gentleman is discussing the motion on the Order Paper.

Dr. Marek: I am certainly doing so, and if I was not in order, I hope to be in order now.

There were Welsh Members who had different views on the Bill, about which they were knowledgeable and to which they wanted to contribute. The Bill might well have been passed; I think that it would have been. But the Government have tabled today's motion, thus denying most of us the opportunity to contribute towards the government of Wales, and Cardiff, its capital city.

I very much regret that fact. I cannot do anything more about it, as we are governed by the rules of the House, but I hope that we will divide on the motion and that as many of my hon. Friends—whether they support or oppose the Bill—will vote with me. We must show clearly that the motion is a manifestation of the jackboot tactics of the Conservative Government who have no roots or representation within the Principality and are foisting their will on Wales and its representatives, who are Opposition Members, as its representatives have been for the past 60, 70 and 80 years.

If the Government have a shred of integrity, they should rethink, withdraw the motion and consult through the usual channels to see whether agreement can be obtained so that we have a meaningful Committee. Its members should not be English Members of Parliament —probably sitting in south-east constituencies—with one qualification: no interest in Cardiff bay, the barrage or the Bill. Hon. Members who are interested in the Cardiff bay barrage should be able to participate in the debate in Committee. I think that that is the earnest wish of Opposition Members, and I hope that the Government will consider the position carefully before we vote on the motion.

10.52 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Since 1282 Wales has had—*[Interruption.]* I thought that that might raise a cheer from immediately behind me. I shall start again: since 1282 Wales has had few distinctive constitutional rights. Tonight the Government have challenged one of those few remaining rights.

Of course, the Government have the perfect right to table the motion, and to seek to have a Committee that includes Members from outside Wales and does not reflect the political balance in Wales. But my understanding is that this is the first time, at least in modern times, that the Government have sought to force through such a motion. As the Minister said, in the past such motions have been passed, but I believe that they have been passed as a result of agreement through the usual channels. Therefore, tonight there has been an important constitutional departure for Wales, and with it a diminution of the constitutional rights of the Welsh people.

It is not important if uncontroversial Bills are discussed in Standing Committees that do not reflect the political balance of Wales. But when considering a controversial measure such as the Bill before us, surely it must be a fundamental presumption that the Bill should follow the well laid down constitutional procedure. The presumption should be that controversial Bills go to the Welsh Grand Committee and the Government should take the risk of losing controversial Bills if that is the will of the Welsh people.

There is only one way in which the will of the Welsh people is represented in the House: through Members who represent Welsh constituencies. There is only one forum that gathers together Members who represent Welsh constituencies: the Welsh Grand Committee, which is the sum total of the Welsh constitution in the House of Commons.

Mr. Roy Hughes: The hon. and learned Gentleman speaks about the Welsh Grand Committee. I was the Chairman of that Committee when it conducted the Second Reading of the Conwy Tunnel (Supplementary Powers) Bill which became an Act in 1983. Why can the same procedure not apply now?

Mr. Carlile: We are dealing with a motion which is slightly different in procedural terms. However, I take the hon. Gentleman's point.

If, as I have suggested, there is a presumption that controversial Welsh legislation in constitutional, legal terms should be dealt with by the Welsh Grand Committee, surely we are entitled to hear some evidence from the Minister to rebut that presumption. The Minister's speech was an extraordinarily small tunnel dug between the cell in which he is trapped and the outside world to enable him to try to escape from giving such evidence. The Minister is a nice man, but his speech was an insult to the House because he did not try to present a case for taking this controversial Welsh Bill before a Committee which would be dominated by the Government Whips. *[Interruption.]* Some hon. Members find Welsh business uninteresting. It would be polite for them to go to the Smoking Room, which is where they belong at this time of night. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) smiles. I am willing to give way to him if he wishes to share the joke. Conservatives seem to have an extraordinary, cavalier attitude to this important piece of Welsh legislation. That attitude is depicted by the loutish element below the Gangway.

The Government's attitude is extremely disreputable. This week they are paying lip service to world environmental problems. The proposal for the Cardiff barrage has raised tremendous environmental debate in Wales. The procedural motion seeks to brush aside the democratically expressed environmental concerns of Welsh Members. Those concerns can be expressed democratically only in the Welsh Grand Committee, and in tabling the motion the Government are treating the people of Wales with contempt.

The Secretary of State for Wales occasionally shows quite a degree of sensitivity—perhaps because he is not a Welsh Member—to the wishes of the people of Wales. He has often tried to keep Wales sweet, perhaps by going a little too far in the other direction and by consulting and obtaining opinion from as wide a spectrum as possible. Therefore, it is surprising that he should think it right to ride roughshod over the wishes of the people of Wales.

[Mr. Carlile]

The Secretary of State is, or was once if he will forgive me putting it that way, a distinguished lawyer in private practice. He should reflect for a moment on the dangerous constitutional principle that he is setting. That principle will enable the Government at will to push aside a long-standing major protection for the people of Wales. I hope that the Government will see that they have made a serious error and will say at the end of the debate that they have decided to think again.

10.59 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I shall speak briefly because my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy), in an eloquent and powerful speech from the Opposition Front Bench, advanced the general case against the motion.

The great tradition of this place, even in the unreformed House, was that when it came to considering Bills that affected interests, the names of hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber were called out. That procedure was followed by an important and significant addition, which was that those who also had interests, whether they be Members representing constituencies in Wales, Gloucestershire or Herefordshire, should be added to the Committee. They, too, had voices. The unreformed House of Commons observed the principle that Members who had a particular interest could become members of the relevant Committee.

In my intervention I asked the Minister when a private Bill was last turned into a public Bill. The Bill that is the subject of the motion began life as a private Bill, and over the centuries Bills have been brought before the House that reflected private interests. As I have said, in the past any Member who represented an interest was entitled to serve in Committee. As a private Bill has become a public Bill, we should observe that fundamental principle. It should be considered in addition to the powerful arguments that my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen has advanced on the general issues.

When last did we convert a private Bill into a public Bill? The Minister failed to answer the question earlier. The Bill is different from the examples that he quoted, for he referred to Bills that were public from the start. They were agreed to by both sides of the House and, therefore, the procedure was agreed. In this instance the Government have decided to introduce a controversial motion which affects consideration of a controversial Bill. As I have said, it started its passage as a private Bill, not a public Bill.

It becomes clear on flicking through the journals of even the unreformed House of Commons that any Member who felt that he had an interest in legislation was entitled to join the relevant Committee and make his case. As the Bill that is the subject of the motion was originally private legislation, it should surely be considered by a Committee that reflects the widest spread of interests in the House. That means that every Welsh voice should be heard in Committee.

I understand the inconvenience that the Government face. Imagine what they would be presented with in Committee. There would be 38 Welsh Members, of whom only six would be firm Government supporters. I understand, of course, that in this instance there are cross-party views. That means that every Government supporter would have to suffer the indignity, as it were, of attending the sittings of the Committee.

The Government should be taught an important lesson. For 13 years they have driven legislation through the House for which they have not had to sweat. The Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill is a piece of proposed legislation for which they should sweat, irrespective of where individual Members stand on the issue. If the Government want the Bill to pass through the House, they should accept a Committee of 38 Members. They could add however many Members they might wish to create a theoretical majority. It would be a large Committee, and during the proceedings there could well be changes of view that would be contrary to the wishes of the Government Front Bench. The Bill would then be considered on Report, when the whole House would have to examine the arguments. The Government Whips would then have a role, and no doubt they would try to reverse any changes that had been made in Committee.

At least the Government would have to go through the hoop of attrition during the consideration of proposed legislation. For a long time the Government have not had to face the attrition that is involved in enacting legislation with a comparatively small majority. They must learn a lesson or two, and there is no harm in starting now. Over the past 13 years——

Mr. Alan Williams: The Government have the power to do exactly what my hon. Friend wants. Instead of diminishing the Welsh role they could change the maximum Committee membership of 50. They could increase the maximum to 60, 70 or 80. If they want a majority, why do they not change the maximum Committee membership and allow every Welsh Member to examine the Bill in Committee?

Mr. Rowlands: My right hon. Friend makes a valid point. We await the Minister's reply with interest. It will be terribly inconvenient to drag in many Conservative Back Benchers to overrule the wishes of the Committee and of Welsh Members.

Labour Members want the Committee to be established, because we want to expose the significance and character of such behaviour. The Government are entitled to reintroduce the Bill and to use Whips to carry the legislation, but I do not see why we should accept the gerrymandering of the Committee stage of a Bill that should be subject to genuine debate and cross-party and internal party debate in Committee.

11.5 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): The motion seeks to determine the membership of the Committee that will consider the detail of a Bill which is of major importance to my constituents.

I have supported the Bill and have sought to improve it at every stage of its passage in its present incarnation as a hybrid Bill and in its previous form as a private Bill. Because I want no misunderstanding in the House or, more important, among my constituents, I wish briefly to explain my view.

Tonight's debate is not about the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill, as the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) said. Hon. Friends who supported the Bill with me are among those who are most concerned about what the Government are seeking to do and will therefore vote against the motion. A vote against the motion and against the exception to the Standing Order is, therefore, in no sense a vote against the Bill.

Perhaps it should not be necessary to spell out such an obvious point, but the House should be aware that attempts have been made in the past, sometimes by opponents of the Bill and sometimes by adherents of the Conservative party, to misrepresent votes cast on previous occasions. Let us have no nonsense on that account in regard to tonight's vote.

Tonight's debate is about the way in which Wales is governed. The Standing Order, the importance of which

[Mr. Alun Michael]

was stressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen, enunciates an important principle: that issues wholly to the interest of the people of Wales should be decided by those elected by the people of Wales. Although there are precedents for the motion, most were set by a Labour Government who enjoyed majority support by the electors of Wales.

I am keen to see proper scrutiny of the Bill and proper consideration of the amendments tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen on behalf of the Opposition. I therefore see some value in a smaller Committee than is dictated by the Standing Order, but the implications of the issues before us are much wider.

Until now, the one view on which we have all been united is that the procedures under which the Bill and its predecessors have been considered are complicated, obscure and unhelpful. Tonight's debate addresses the constitutional point of a democratic deficit resulting from the wide powers available to the Government to ignore the views of the people of Wales, who did not vote for a Conservative Government. They certainly did not vote for a Liberal or nationalist Government either; they voted for a Labour Government.

I have faith that an elected assembly, such as that proposed by the Labour party, would, given full consideration of all the issues, have supported the measure that the Committee will consider, just as the Labour-controlled county of South Glamorgan has supported and promoted the barrage throughout.

That is my personal view. Others may differ, but that is not the issue before us. What is before us is not support or opposition to the barrage Bill but the simple question whether the principle established when the Standing Order was first implemented should be cast aside or diminished. Even more important—this is my final and most crucial point—it should be upheld when the House considers the Welsh language Bill, which the Government will, at long last, introduce shortly, and the reform of local government, which has such important implications for every part of Wales.

I hope that the Minister will consider that last point very seriously and address it in his response to the debate. I am surprised, indeed, that he did not do so in his introduction to the debate. It is crucial to consideration of the motion that he should give us a cast-iron promise on behalf of the Government that the principle in the Standing Order will be respected without interference in respect of those two Bills and similar Bills of wide interest to Wales that are brought before the House in the future.

11.9 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) is deluding himself if he believes that he will get that assurance from the Minister. I listened very carefully to the Minister when he dealt with that issue and I drew two conclusions.

First, if there is logic in what the Government are doing on this occasion and if they are empowered to set aside the Standing Orders, logic will allow them to do exactly the same in future when it suits them. I hardly think that the Minister will give a guarantee. Secondly, if one reads the Minister's comments in *Hansard* one will see that he said that it is for the House on a future occasion to decide what its view will be. I have been here long enough to know what that means—it means that the Government want to restrict tonight's debate to the particular motion, but it is as clear as can be that if there is a recurrence of the situation in which the Government do not have a mandate or majority for legislation referring specifically to Wales, they will reintroduce the order.

I have no doubt that when we come to debate local government reorganisation or the Welsh language Bill—precisely the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth—we shall again be in the same position. I am not being derogatory, but we shall face an English Minister and English Tory Members of Parliament driving through the House legislation which will deny the right of Welsh Members of Parliament to sit in on a Committee stage that will shape the future of local government in their communities.

That is a travesty of democracy and it is precisely because I believe that the Minister understands that it is a travesty that he was so casual and cursory in opening the debate. He made no attempt at justification or to explain the rationale. He tried to skip over the debate by saying that it was not about the Bill. Of course the debate is not about the Bill, but the Bill is at the heart of the dilemma now facing the Government.

If the Bill was non-controversial, we would not be in this position. If it were non-controversial like the legislation on Caldey island and the Conwy crossing, it would have gone through. The fact that the Bill is controversial means that it should be subject to democratic scrutiny. As my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) said, that opportunity will exist on Report but the Government are denying us the right to have a considered and informed debate in Committee. It is a shame that the Government should be in such a position.

The motion will undoubtedly be passed. We are told that it is a matter for the House and that every hon. Member will be free to vote as he or she wishes, but we know that that is not true. The Secretary of State failed when he tried to impose a whip when the legislation was a private Bill. This time, the Government Whips are out in force and they will ensure that there is a majority for the motion. That will mean that the voice of the people of Wales as expressed in the ballot box at the election will be set aside.

The people of Wales elected 27 Labour members of Parliament. For the record, they elected six Tory Members of Parliament. With the exception of the two conscripts on the Front Bench, we have not seen those six. There can be no justification for that. The Minister and his colleagues can preach the sanctity of the United Kingdom, but they must recognise that Wales is a nation with its own institutions and political structures. For 80 years the very Standing Order that the Government are setting aside has been part of the bedrock of our Welsh nationhood.

The Government must think carefully about the consequences of what they are doing, especially when it is being done in the teeth of united opposition. I am grateful that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth spoke as he did. Let Ministers have no doubt that it is not a question of those who oppose the Cardiff bay barrage opposing the motion. Every Welsh Opposition

Member of Parliament is involved, including those from the Labour party and from Plaid Cymru. The solitary Liberal Democrat has also added his voice.

We are united in telling the Government that what they are about to do is a folly because they are setting aside the verdict of the people of Wales. What the Government sow tonight they will reap in the not-too-distant future.

11.14 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The words of my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) have prompted me to speak in the debate, although I had not intended to do so.

There has been considerable discussion in my party about a Welsh assembly and about the proper government of Wales. Unlike most of my colleagues, I have never believed that there should be a Welsh assembly because the Welsh assembly is envisaged by my party and by other people as being an assembly that would take powers from local government. I cannot imagine this House giving up its powers to an assembly in Wales. That is why I have always been committed to the concept of a Welsh parliament with legislative and revenue powers. I am not likely to join Plaid Cymru in pursuing my case. If I ever spoke in a Welsh parliament, I know that I would never have to call on a Liberal Democrat because no Liberal Democrat would be elected to a Welsh parliament.

My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly has put his finger on the issue. The Government are planting a seed in Wales and they will rue the day they take this action. They are feeding the nationalist movement in Wales as represented by the hon. Members sitting behind me, who were elected by 8 per cent. of the electorate.

For the slight advantage of getting the Bill on the statute book sooner rather than later, which is all that the motion will achieve, the Government are acting in a way that will constitutionally destroy politics in Wales as we know them today. The Government do not realise what they are doing.

11.17 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): May I prevail on the Secretary of State to take a more reasonable view of how he deals with the situation? One well understands that the Government feel that they must get their legislation through, although many of us do not regard the measure as an appropriate Government Bill. There is an alternative which I have already tried to intimate. If there were no alternative, one could understand the Secretary of State coming here and riding roughshod over Welsh Members and over the Standing Orders.

The Minister has quoted precedents which do not bear examination. When the Labour Government were in power and they took the action proposed today, they reduced their representation on the Standing Committee to give the Opposition a better opportunity to present a balanced view. On the other hand, we should examine the later precedents quoted which occurred in the 1980s under this Government. The Conservatives introduced similar measures without opposition by Labour because the Opposition agreed that, for the Bills involved, not all Members representing Welsh seats would wish to be members of the Committee. This is the first time since 1907 that the Opposition have said that they will not support such a change because they think that every Welsh Member should have the freedom to participate in debates.

There is a way by which the objectives of both sides could be reconciled. It may not meet with the wishes of my hon. Friends; I have not had a chance to consult them. The Opposition's right to sustain the freedom of every Welsh Member to take part in discussions on the Bill could be sustained, and the Government's majority maintained, if instead of altering this Standing Order the Government chose to alter the earlier Standing Order that sets a ceiling on the number of members of the Committee. If that ceiling were raised from 50 to 65, every Welsh Member could take part and the Government could have their majority. Honour would be satisfied on both sides of the House.

This is a test of the reasonableness of the Secretary of State. He can go away and consider our proposition this evening, discuss it through certain channels, and establish whether we can reach some agreed arrangement; or he can do something that would be grossly offensive not just to Opposition Members, but to the people of Wales. Given the depletion in the number of Conservative Back Benchers, the right hon. Gentleman can force a vote on a motion that he need not push—for reasons that I have explained. He can call on the English Back Benchers in the Tea Room and other rooms in the House and use them to bulldoze his wishes through against the wishes of Welsh Members.

Let me appeal to the Secretary of State, even at this late stage. We need not waste much time; if the usual channels agreed the matter, it could go through on the nod. I cannot give a commitment to that effect, but it is an option. I realise that neither of the right hon. Gentleman's colleagues is in a position to make such a policy change without his consideration. I therefore ask him to use his power to protect the rights of Welsh Members, and the Welsh electorate, by giving just a week's consideration to my proposal.

11.22 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): All my hon. Friends have spoken briefly, and I want to speak briefly as well. I simply want to ensure that our views have been put on record, in a way that appeals to what used to be thought of as the better nature of Ministers. I ask them not to use the Whip, and a procedural device in Standing Committee, to ram through the legislation, and then to repeat the exercise when other Welsh legislation is dealt with later in the Session. I hope that the Secretary of State, his ministerial team and Government business managers will respond to that appeal. It is rare for three exclusively Welsh Bills to arise in a single, if long, Session of Parliament.

The Prime Minister has spoken of his wish to "take stock"—I use his phrase—of the need to examine the constitutional relationship between an overwhelmingly Tory England and an overwhelmingly Labour Scotland, but he has not expressed a similar wish to deal with the relationship between a largely Tory England and an overwhelmingly Labour Wales.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): During the Committee stage of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill, Scottish Members called for a ruling. The Chairman ruled that Standing Order No. 86 should apply in consideration

[Mr. Michael Connarty]

of the Bill, which is very controversial and will affect hundreds of thousands of people in Scotland. Perhaps his decision to adhere to Standing Orders was a move in the right direction. Why have not the Government taken the same view in this instance?

Mr. Morgan: I very much welcome that display of Celtic solidarity from my Scottish colleague. It is no more than I would have expected from a new Scottish colleague, because we are equally interested in seeing how we can keep the United Kingdom united. To do that, the largely English majority of the Tory Government should not abuse the power to treat sensitively the issue of how to handle the fact that Scotland and Wales are nowhere as big as England. England has 82 per cent. of the population and 82 per cent. of the membership of the House.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): Can the hon. Gentleman point to an example of the Government being sensitive to the needs of Wales?

Mr. Morgan: Not so far—absolutely not. I have said that they have made some intimation that they intend to be sensitive to the needs of Scotland. They appear tonight to be going in the opposite direction in regard to Wales. That is what is so disappointing. At the same time as they are at least trying to make the first moves towards redefining the relationship with Scotland to confer greater powers of control—although that has not yet happened, but there have been early intimations of it—we in Wales are getting the mucky end of the stick. There is no doubt about that.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Has my hon. Friend given any thought to the addition of another member of the Government on the Front Bench, who may want to intervene to talk about a family matter known as the elective dictatorship, which we are experiencing tonight?

Mr. Morgan: The elective dictatorship is the problem, but the problem is also the shape of the United Kingdom. Scotland has 10 per cent. of the population, Wales has 5 per cent., and Northern Ireland has 3 per cent. Altogether that is about 18 per cent., but 82 per cent. remains to England. That relationship must be dealt with sensitively. So far, we are moving in the wrong direction. We want the Government to undertake to take back the matter and consider it and the suggestions made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) and my hon. Friends.

The Government should redefine the way in which they are approaching exclusively Welsh legislation, given that they now have three measures coming up. Whereas it used to be one Welsh Bill every two years, we have three in a year and a half of this long Session. The Government should try to start in the way they mean to continue. So far, the Minister has said absolutely nothing about what will happen with the Welsh language Bill. Will he say that he will not use the Standing Orders to curtail Welsh Members' rights to participate in proceedings on the Welsh language Bill or the Welsh local government reform Bill, which was not mentioned in the Queen's Speech, but we have since been promised it? Will he say, "Well, we won't do that with the Welsh local government reform Bill," or is this the thin end of the wedge? We do not know.

I hope that the Minister will say something. If he is not willing to say something, we shall fear the worst. The people of Wales, as has been said by three Opposition parties, will be very angry and will perceive that the Tory party is using the jackboot and importing Tory Back Benchers for the sole purpose of ramming through the legislation.

Sheep-like English Back Benchers will not even think about the issues. They will not even know the names of the places that are referred to. They will simply follow in the time-honoured manner and be compared unfavourably with Sainsbury's shopping trolleys in respect of having minds of their own. They will vote how Government Whips tell them without even being aware of what they are voting on, simply to create an artificial majority by the importation of carpetbagging English Back-Bench Members to make up the majority that the Government cannot win of their own accord by democratic vote in Wales.

Let us remember that this is not the first time that this procedure has been applied to the Bill. It was applied just before the general election. On 9 March, one of the worst examples of Government business in shambles in the past 10 years was displayed in the House by Nicholas Bennett, the Minister's predecessor. We all remember it. Nicholas Bennett was an hon. Member, never to be a right hon. Member, and probably will never be an hon. Member again. He was in charge of that supreme shambles. The Bill was bounced straight into Standing Committee less than a week before Parliament was due to rise. At the last minute, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, the day before the Bill was to be considered in Standing Committee, the Clerks discovered that the exemption for Welsh legislation from the normal rules of the House states that the Government's majority must be reflected in Committee and that hon. Members who played a prominent role on Second Reading should be on the Committee.

Upstairs the Government discovered all of a sudden, "Ah, this is Welsh legislation. What are we going to do?" The postcards were sent round in a hurry saying to hon. Members, "Can you be there tomorrow?" Of course, we all turned up in large numbers because we do our work. We expect to have to turn up when Welsh business is discussed, in order to earn our salaries at the end of the month.

But Conservative Back-Bench Members—there are only half a dozen of them—have not even bothered to turn up tonight. I do not know what they are doing. How can they ask the people of Wales to elect them when they do not show any interest in Welsh business when they have the chance? It is an absolute disgrace. They are not even as good as Sainsbury's shopping trolleys which they have been for five years. I am disgusted by the lack of interest among the four new Welsh Conservative Back-Bench Members—the hon. Members for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney), for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) and for Monmouth (Mr. Evans).

When the Standing Order was applied to keep the Committee to 20, the people of Wales were given the opportunity to express their democratic verdict on what they thought about Tory Governments and their measures. What did they say? Before the election Labour had 26 Members and the Conservatives had six. After the election we have finished up with 27 Members and the Government still have six. They are now in an even smaller

minority than before. The people of Wales had their chance to express a view on a raft of Government measures and gave their verdict.

Who should determine who should sit on Standing Committees to deal with exclusively Welsh legislation? The Opposition say that, through their votes at general elections, the people of Wales should decide. They had the chance to do it. A plebiscite was held on 9 April. In Wales the Labour party did three or four times as well as the Conservative party. The Government say, "We do not care about that. We have to get our business through. We do not care if we are in a tiny minority." They simply ram the legislation through by bringing in English Tory Members of Parliament.

Is that the sort of message that we want to send to the people of eastern Europe and the trouble-torn peoples of the Balkans? Do we want to say, "Well, this is the way we do it in the Mother of Parliaments. We do not give a damn about small nations on the periphery of the United Kingdom"? Is that what we wish to say to the people of Yugoslavia as we attempt to send in peace missions and tell them how to organise themselves and keep themselves apart? Are we so insensitive to the demands and rights of peripheral parts of the United Kingdom which have had rights laid down in the Standing Orders of the House for 85 years?

The Government are going in the wrong direction and had better rethink. This is the second time that they have taken such a measure in respect of this Bill at exactly the same stage. We have had a general election in between times and I do not want them to be so foolish as to create further anger in Wales on the issue.

We had the Danish referendum last week. It is the same issue again. Peripheral countries do not want to be pushed around by the big countries. It is exactly the same issue. the Government must now take note of the Danish referendum result. They will also have to take note of the verdict of the Welsh people on 9 April. It is all part of the treatment of minorities within a wider democracy. I hope that the Government are getting the message clearly.

We are not discussing the merits or demerits of the barrage. That is not the point at issue tonight. The point at issue is the way in which the Government treat minorities in the House and how we can express the rights that we have had for 85 years. The Minister did not give an accurate picture of the clash at the heart of the motion between the Government's desire to have a majority on the Bill, which is expressed in hidden terms, and the rights of minorities. He skipped through the introduction to the Bill. He referred to the fact the Government have to have majorities on Standing Committees. Standing Order No. 86 does not say that, but merely hints at it.

It is custom and practice in the House for the Government to have a majority. Standing Order No. 86 states:

"shall have regard . . . to the composition of the House".

It does not state that there must be a majority. That is simply hinted at. It is also a custom and practice of the House that hon. Members who played a major part in the Second Reading debate should be on the Standing Committee. That is not actually stated in the Standing Order, but it is hinted at. One has to read between the lines. That is what we normally assume is the meaning of

"shall have regard to the qualifications of those Members nominated".

That does not actually state that those hon. Members should be the people who played a major part in the Second Reading debate.

However, the exemption about Welsh business is not a matter of hints or reading between the lines. The point is made in black and white. If the legislation is Welsh legislation—and the Clerks have ruled that this is—one exempts from it the provisions about reflecting the Government's majority. That is clear in mathematical print and there can be no doubt about it. All Welsh legislation is exempt from the rule that states that one shall preserve in the Standing Committee the balance of the majority of the House.

In a skimpy dish-rag of an opening speech, the Minister tried to imply that those two great issues clashed and therefore the Government had to decide how to resolve the clash. There is no clash. Welsh legislation is exempt from the first principle. That is absolutely plain in Standing Order No. 86. If it is exempt from the principle, less than two months after the general election, the Government should have regard for the views of the Welsh people. The people of Wales should decide who goes on Standing Committees that deal with exclusively Welsh legislation and not the Tory majority elected outside Wales.

11.35 pm

Mr. Gwilym Jones: We have had a very good, short and generally good-natured debate. Even some of the stronger comments fall within the good nature in which we generally manage to conduct all Welsh affairs. Happily, we managed to stay almost entirely within the remit of the motion and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, had very seldom to call us to order. I will try to deal with any unanswered questions that have arisen in the debate.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), in a brief contribution, presented a fascinating history of past ways of considering such measures. I am afraid I do not have the information readily available to answer his question about when a private Bill was last turned into a public Bill. I will try to find out for the hon. Gentleman, and I hope that he will accept that I will write to him with that information.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) made several references to the Welsh Grand Committee. However, that is not included in Standing Order No. 86. While there are references to the Scottish Grand Committee, there is no suggestion that Welsh legislation should be directed towards the Welsh Grand Committee.

The hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy), from the Opposition Front Bench, cited the examples——

Mr. Morgan: The beginning of Standing Order No. 86 states:

"Save in the case of—

(a) the Scottish Grand Committee,

(b) the Welsh Grand Committee, and

(c) a standing committee for the consideration of a bill on report".

I am sure that the Minister did not mean to say that there was no mention of the Welsh Grand Committee in Standing Order No. 86. Unless he has a different version of the Standing Order from mine, he is not correct.

Mr. Jones: I will reflect on that point if necessary. However, I have a copy of the Standing Order and the most important point, which I quoted earlier, states:

[Mr. Jones]

"for the consideration of any public bill relating exclusively to Wales, the committee shall be so constituted as to include all Members sitting for constituencies in Wales."

I think that that is the point that we must address this evening, and that is the point that we have been addressing. We should have made progress on it.

Mr. Morgan: My point is that I believe that the Minister said in error that there was no reference to the Welsh Grand Committee in Standing Order No. 86. I was anxious to correct him because we Whitchurch grammar school boys have got to stick together.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. When he waves the old school tie at me, I have to concede. Yes, there is reference at the beginning of the Standing Order to

"Save in the case of —. . .

(b) the Welsh Grand Committee".

However, we must direct our attention to the latter part of Standing Order No. 86 and the proviso to which I have already referred and which is the basis of our discussion this evening.

The hon. Member for Torfaen cited the examples from 1975 and 1976, when there was a Labour Government. I cited those examples, and others from 1983 and 1990 when there was a Conservative Government. In 1983, when we dealt with the Conwy Tunnel (Supplementary Powers) Bill, there was an unopposed motion to limit the Standing Committee to 17 members, including not fewer than 12 Members sitting for constituencies in Wales. That is exactly what we seek to do through this motion. The 1990 example of the Caldey Island Bill, which was referred to a Standing Committee for Second Reading, was dealt with by a Committee consisting of only 10 Members representing Welsh constituencies.

Mr. Murphy: I was fortunate enough to be one of those 10 Members who dealt with the Caldey Island Bill, but that measure did not arouse controversy in Wales. Will the Minister answer our point that we are disputing the motion because this is the only time that such a controversial Bill hs been considered in this way?

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman is right. By my recollection, more controversy has surrounded the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill than was felt about the Caldey Island Bill, or even with the Bill dealing with the Conwy tunnel. Nevertheless, we are dealing with a procedural motion, and we must confine ourselves to that.

Mr. Alex Carlile: The House would be grateful if the Minister could cite any opposed motion of this sort. Is it not true that, whenever a motion such as this has been passed, it has dealt with unopposed Bills? Therefore, does he accept that the Government are taking an exceptional course?

Mr. Jones: The hon. and learned Gentleman is being somewhat premature. We have not yet got to the vote on the motion, and I sincerely hope that my poor eloquence at the Dispatch Box will persuade and convince him not to oppose the motion.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) suggested that the ceiling on membership of a Standing Committee should be raised to 65. I doubt whether there is any precedence for such a suggestion. It would move us towards an unwieldy Committee, which must be contrary to the spirit of Standing Order No. 86 under which a Committee shall have not more than 50 members.

Mr. Alan Williams: I consulted the Clerk of the House before making that proposal, and he agreed that there is nothing to stop the House making such a rule if it so wished. The advantage of the system is that it retains the requirement to which the Minister referred—that, where possible, every Welsh Member should be able to take part.

Mr. Jones: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman is correct, but I doubt whether there is any precedent for doing it. The House can do what it wants. I feel that it would be at variance with the way in which things have been done before to have such a large Committee. However, I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for one thing. He was the first speaker, apart from me, to acknowledge that there is a serious inconsistency in Standing Order No. 86 that has to be dealt with. That is what the motion will achieve.

Mr. Morgan: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the Minister to assert that the Standing Orders of the House have an inherent contradiction within them that makes them inoperable?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That seems to me to be a double negative. I ask the hon. Gentleman to rethink his point.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) was concerned about the precedents that the debate was establishing. I do not regard what we are doing as setting a precedent. I cannot do anything that will bind the House in the future. Whatever we choose to do is entirely a matter for the House of Commons. I can say no more or less.

Mr. Michael: I must make it clear that I was asking the hon. Gentleman, not to bind the House, but to bind the Government in relation to the important Bills on the Welsh language and the reorganisation of local government structure in Wales. The Minister comes to the Dispatch Box on behalf of the Government and I ask him to bind them, not the House.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman said that he did not catch my earlier remarks, but I know that the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) did. It always remains for the House to decide what it will do on future occasions. I can say no more and no less than that. I acknowledge that the hon. Member for Caerphilly echoed the concern expressed by his hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth.

Mr. Michael: If the Minister had the authority to do so, he could say that neither he nor his ministerial colleagues would seek to exempt the application of the Standing Order to the Committee stage of the Bills on the Welsh language and Welsh local government. That would greatly assist the House. Surely the Government can give that assurance now. If the Government wish to show respect to the House and accept the important points of principle that we raised about those two Bills, it is open to the Minister to offer that assurance on their behalf.

Mr. Jones: I have been clear and concise. Whatever the legislation, I cannot commit the House. It will be for the House to consider the issue as and when specific legislation is discussed.

Mr. Alan Williams: The Minister should think again about my suggestion. He rejected it only on the ground that there is no precedent for it, but he accepted that, according to the advice of the Clerks, it is procedurally possible and appropriate. Can he quote any precedent for what the Government are now doing by forcing through a change against the wishes of the Welsh Members?

Mr. Jones: I have already dealt with the right hon. Gentleman's point. I hope that we can proceed on an unopposed basis; that is what I am seeking to persuade the right hon. Gentleman to do.

Finally, I must refer to my old school chum, the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). I should congratulate him on making his shortest and most concise contribution to date on the Bill. I even detected a note of sympathy in his speech, as he conceded that we must find the best way forward. However, I do not accept his argument that the motion represents a Government attempt to ram the Bill through the House. He also invented notions about exempt principles in the Standing Order that I cannot see. His sum case was for the preservation of an inconsistency—in itself an inconsistency that should not be allowed.

The motion represents the best way forward and the best response to the existing inconsistency. With all due respect to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West, it is a far better answer than that which he proposed. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 191, Noes 86.

Division No. 27] **[11.48 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Richards, Rod
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew MacKay and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

NOES

Ainger, Nicholas
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Beggs, Roy
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*

Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Fyfe, Maria
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hutton, John
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martlew, Eric
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Murphy, Paul
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Rogers, Allan
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wise, Audrey
Wright, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ted Rowlands and
Mr. Win Griffiths.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 86 (Nomination of standing committees), any Standing Committee appointed for the consideration of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill shall consist of twenty Members, including not fewer than twelve Members sitting for constituencies in Wales.

Employment and Training

11.59 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I beg to move,

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Construction Board) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 27th February, in the last Session of Parliament be approved.

The proposals seek authority for the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board to raise a levy on employers in the engineering construction industry to finance the running costs of the board and to fund a range of training initiatives, including a grants scheme. The proposals provide for a levy based on the payroll of employers and their use of subcontract labour. They cover both the site and head office employment and also provide protection for smaller employers. The proposals have the support of the employers—as required by the Industrial Training Act 1982—and the full support of the board.

The engineering construction industry has characteristics that create peculiar training problems. The mobile nature of the work of the industry and its work force, both geographically and between employers, together with the large-scale use of subcontractors and self-employed labour, produce a unique set of circumstances in that sector of the engineering industry. For those reasons, the industry argued strongly for the need to retain statutory arrangements, including the power to impose a levy on employers. They argued that that was the best way of ensuring that sufficient numbers of new entrants were trained and brought into the industry, and that the skills of existing workers were kept up to date.

We were persuaded to accept those arguments, and the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board was established in its own right in the middle of last year. At the same time, the engineering manufacturing sector opted to set up its own independent arrangements, and was taken out of the statutory system. I am happy to say that the ECITB has worked hard, in partnership with the industry, to meet the manpower and skill needs of that important sector of the economy. Employers in the industry remain firm in their support for the board. That fact will be taken into account when the next review takes place in 1994.

We were concerned to ensure that statutory burdens on firms were kept to a minimum, and that firms that trained appropriately were rewarded. In the proposals, the small firms threshold has been raised for both head offices and sites. In addition, the exemption scheme has been replaced by a grant scheme designed to reward those employers who train in key skill areas and those who seek investors in people awards. Our preference remains for independent employer-led sector training arrangements, but we accept there are strong arguments for the exceptions to continue. I expect to lay before the House shortly an order to wind up the Road Transport Board.

Industry training organisations are a vital component of the national training framework, complementing the work of training and enterprise councils at local level, and the Government well recognise the value of their contribution individually, and collectively through their national council. The order will secure the continuation of effective training arrangements in the small but important engineering construction sector as part of the network of sector training arrangements. I commend it to the House.

12.3 am

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): We have no intention of dividing the House, but we will take this opportunity to express our concerns about some of the Government's work in the training sector. The order relating to the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board is moved every year, and another order is moved for the Construction Industry Training Board.

It is a tragedy that what started as an impressive infrastructure of skills training in the early part of the 1980s has been reduced from 23 boards to two. The key worry about the Government's policies is that this may be one of the last times that an order is moved. The Government are considering reducing the final two boards to what they euphemistically describe as a voluntary situation. We take exception to that and I want to highlight the continuing crisis in skills in Britain and the Government's failure to face up to the reality of that crisis, and to describe some of the deficiencies in Government policies.

Nearly 100,000 young people are currently without a youth training place. For two reasons, that is a scandal. First, young people have neither training nor a job and, secondly, they have no benefit. The Government can dismiss that by saying that it is a matter for social security, but Britain is now the only country in Europe in which nearly 100,000 young people are not offered training, a job, or benefit. Consequently, they have no hope of securing a place in a society that is still dominated by the work ethic. In this decade the Government have led us to believe that there was an economic miracle. The recently published labour force survey for 1991 shows that there was a fall in the number of people in training in Britain. How can that be when the Government have told us——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will address himself to the engineering construction board. He must relate at least part of his speech to that.

Mr. McLeish: The engineering industry has the most impressive record of all industries in training young people. The labour force survey, which I mentioned, includes people of all ages who are training in all industries, including engineering. My speech is germane not only to the engineering industry but to the wider skills crisis that the Government are ignoring. I shall deal with our specific worries about that industry's future.

The proportion of people in training has gone down from 15·4 per cent. of the population in 1990 to 14·9 per cent. The Government cannot take any comfort from that, because it suggests that, setting aside the quality and qualification issues, there is a volume problem in that the number of people in training is falling. The situation has been dramatically worsened by cuts over the past few years. There is press speculation that the Department of Employment may be forced to make further cuts at a time when the need for skills is great and the need for training for the unemployed is significant. That sets the general context in which any debate on skills should be set.

The Government response will be, "What about TECs and their local delivery of training?" The innovation of TECs has been warmly welcomed by all hon. Members. The Government have invested in them as a flagship policy, but TECs can function properly only if they have a clearly focused policy and the right resources to undertake their tasks. One of those tasks is much better and more effective co-ordination with sector organisations such as the Construction Industry Training Board and the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board.

The Government have invested a great deal of time and resources in TECs, but have given no time whatever to the development of sector policy which is important in other European countries. They have simply tinkered with the problems surrounding the skills crisis. Voluntarism is a euphemism for the market model, and it is failing Britain, young people, our skilled engineering sectors and the unemployed. At a time of economic crisis the Government will make matters worse by further cuts in training expenditure. Why will the Department of Employment and the Government not look at the deep-seated, long-term structural problems that Britain faces? It is not a partisan issue. Compared with every competitor country in Europe and the Pacific rim and with America and Japan, we lag behind on the key indicator of skills.

Many hoped that after 13 years of Conservative Government—like many other parties, the Conservative party has extolled the virtues of training—we would see a closing of the gap that has opened between Britain and its European and worldwide competitors. It is sad that that has not happened. The Opposition contend that the wrong agenda is being pursued. If there is any doubt about Britain's position in the 1990s, and there is, we must compete, produce and improve our economic performance by ensuring that along with our TECs, which are good for local delivery and which tackle a wide range of issues, we have strong, responsive and well-funded sector initiatives. There are real fears among members of the CITB, the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board and the newly established Employment Training Authority that the Government are not interested in and committed to seeing through the fundamental changes that will improve our competitive position. I shall quote from the CITB news release of 2 June. The chairman of the board, Sir Clifford Chetwood was talking to the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicans when he said:

"Without a statutory levy the board would not be able to afford to pay grants to employers using approved courses."

That is not a socialist speaking. Sir Clifford has a wide knowledge of the construction industry. He has constantly lectured the Government on the wisdom of having a statutory framework, and up to now the Government have accepted that argument.

The argument that the Government have used to support the CITB has been deployed to support the existence of the ECITB, and that is the need for a statutory framework that provides a levy. Two reviews are taking place of the future of the boards and it is against that background that I say categorically that if the membership of the boards and the employers within the industry want to continue with the statutory framework, they should be allowed to do so. I hope that the Minister will respond to that when he replies to the debate, for the issue is crucial to confidence for the future. I hope that the Minister is taking notes as he laughs his way through. We are facing a crisis and the level of debate from the Government Front Bench is pathetic, as is the support that is being given to important boards that are trying to do important work.

I shall mention some of the achievements of the ECITB. Despite the recession, it is undertaking 26 per cent. more training this year than in the previous year. It has concerns

[Mr. McLeish]

about the future, however, because of the Government's menacing approach to anything that smacks of statutory provision. When will the Minister start to put the skills needs of the nation above the political dogmas of his party? Unlike Germany, France, Japan and Korea, we have a Government who are not committed to the policies that Britain and its economy need. That is sad.

Reviews are being undertaken and I hope that the Government will listen and not lecture. I hope also that they will acknowledge experts who are at the frontiers of new provision, who are doing an excellent job and who are in a better position to tell the Government what is happening than the Government are to tell the experts what they should be doing. It is fundamental that we should have a commitment to allow the boards to continue, if they so wish, with a statutory framework.

It is clear that training is a market failure. Anyone who has examined the history of Britain's economy over the century, or over a longer period, will readily admit that training is a market failure. Against that background, it seems ludicrous that the responses have not overcome the failure but have reinforced it by rejecting a statutory framework and introducing voluntarism regardless of the consequences.

Twenty-three training boards became seven and now there are two, both of which are faced with an uncertain future. There is a crisis of confidence within the boards, which the Government could easily alleviate by making it clear that they intend to listen, as I have suggested.

It is tragic that we can debate such issues only on a order continuing the levy. I challenge the Government to hold a debate on the wider issues that affect skills training which we cannot consider this evening.

I want to suggest a number of key issues that should start to shape Government policy. The first is the rejection of voluntarism, which is not working. Every statistic suggests that we have a gender gap, a regional gap and a widening gap between ourselves and our international competitors. When will the Government realise that the market failure in training must be treated with a combination of the marvellous response that we see from private and public employers and from a Government who are willing to invest their time and energy in providing a statutory framework, which our more successful competitor countries have?

The second issue is public investment. It is a measure of Britain in the 1990s that we are still having a debate on public investment. All the signs are that the public expenditure round, which is under way, will be tough on training. Given the crisis in skills, the Government cannot run away from their responsibilities by pretending that the Treasury is holding a pistol to their head and is saying that they will have to shave off further expenditure on YT, ET or TECs. It simply does not add up. I challenge the Government to say that in the public investment round the Secretary of State for Employment will not only fight her corner but will seek extra resources in a key area for Britain's success in the 1990s.

My third point is that, despite the market rhetoric of the Government, the key to success is the individual. The Government have failed to empower the individual to take advantage of training. They have talked and talked—a bit like their attitude to child care: they talk a lot but action is limited. Why do not they accept that unless we can motivate and empower individuals we shall make little impact on skills problems?

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): We have heard many words from the hon. Gentleman, but on what facts are they based? Until recently, I worked in engineering and in industry. I found the standards of our young people exceptionally high. I had little problem in finding the skills that were required. Employers are increasingly putting cash and resources into training. What we are hearing from the hon. Member is nothing but words.

Mr. McLeish *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) has strayed quite wide. I have been rather tolerant, considering what the Chairman of Ways and Means said earlier. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will stick to the narrow subject of the motion.

Mr. McLeish: I shall, and I hope to respond to the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie). Training impacts on engineering and construction, yet the Government never want to discuss training. The impact on engineering and construction should be discussed widely, even under an apparently limited order.

I could give the hon. Member for Ayr volumes of statistics from the CITB—the Government's labour force —from Europe and from the *Employment Gazette* contradicting his argument. Britain is not producing enough volume. It certainly is not producing enough quality and, although engineering is doing extremely well in the recession, it is not enough to narrow the skills gap between ourselves and Europe in intermediate qualifications, in the training of young people and in the reskilling of old people. There is no dispute—the statistics show that the Government face a crisis, but they are doing nothing about it.

The fourth issue is that of intermediate qualifications. The key in any sector, whether engineering or construction, is to have more and more people with what in this country we call A-level and equivalent qualifications. In the engineering and construction sectors we must have more people at that intermediate stage because that is the area in which the Japanese, for example, invest. They know that the extra 0·5 per cent. added to value means that the economy and production are enhanced in terms not only of volume but of quality.

I have no hesitation in saying that the main message to the Government is that voluntarism is not working. They should listen carefully to the Construction Industry Training Board and the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board before embarking on a review based on the dogma of the Conservative party rather than on the skill needs of the nation. That is crucial, and I look forward to the Government finding a day of their own time for us to debate the issues so that hon. Members can debate them more fully than we have been able to do this evening.

11.20 pm

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) accused me of treating the subject lightly, but that is not the case. If anyone is taking it lightly, it is the Labour party, as shown by its massive attendance.

Before we take any lessons from the hon. Gentleman, perhaps he should look behind him at the great level of support he has. We certainly do not take lightly the training of young people in industry. We take it seriously, which is why we are giving more money than has ever been given before; but, of course, discussions will take place in the usual expenditure round.

The hon. Gentleman asked a number of questions. I have no intention of pre-empting the reviews that are under way, but I can say that the Government are not being dogmatic about the way to proceed. We are looking to independent training organisations in industry where that is the best solution. As I have made clear, where that is not the best way to proceed we are open to representations. We shall be listening very carefully during the reviews. The statutory system has not worked properly so it is right to look for new methods. If they are the best way forward we shall accept them. We shall not be stuck to dogma like the Labour party. My hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) was correct. We regularly hear the Labour party whinge.

The order has general support and I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Construction Board) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 27th February, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ordered,

That Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours be discharged from the Committee of Public Accounts and Mr. Mike Hall be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Mr. Michael Cook

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

12.23 am

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Rachel, a 9-year-old girl, was murdered by strangulation in a car on the Algarve in Portugal in November 1990. Michael Cook, a friend of Rachel's family, was convicted of the murder in February this year and sentenced to 19 years' imprisonment. He was tried by three local judges without a jury. The House will hear that the conviction is unsafe.

I must start with every possible word of sympathy for Rachel and her family. I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) is here because of his concern for his constituent, the victim's mother.

There can be no greater evil than such a crime. I would not defend in any way a child murderer, but I will defend my constituent's right to a fair trial. My responsibility and my job tonight is to highlight the possibility that my constituent may be the victim of a gross miscarriage of justice. Some say that Cook is innocent; some say that the police investigation was inadequate. Some say that the trial verdict was so lacking supporting evidence as to be incredible. Some say that Cook has been tortured and mistreated. Those are not questions which the House can or should decide. In truth, I do not know whether Cook is innocent or guilty. What I do know is that many questions are raised by the case which have the most serious implications, not only for Michael Cook, but for all British subjects travelling abroad.

Let us review some of the evidence. There was, understandably, immense local pressure to clear up this horrible crime. An unsolved child murder would frighten away tourists. An elderly Portuguese gardener said that he saw the murderer and the murder car. He said that the car was red with foreign plates. Cook had such a car. It was alleged that Cook's car tyre marks were found where the body was discovered, and on that prime tyre mark evidence Cook was arrested. It was claimed by the police that Cook had a child-molesting record and that he had confessed to the crime: they had their man. The public furore and the subsequent relief at Cook's arrest were surpassed only by the total outrage against him.

Let us examine the initial key facts. After nine months in gaol, Cook got two good lawyers and it was quickly discovered that the prime—indeed the only—hard evidence linking Cook to the murder was bogus. The tyre marks were of an entirely different type from those of Cook's car. It is also claimed that Cook's car does not have the ground clearance needed for the area where Rachel was found.

Similarly, no confession was ever presented at the trial. It had been claimed by police that two officers heard the confession. One remembered it clearly; the second denied all recollection of it. One would not expect to forget such a thing easily.

Cook appeared in court, with black eyes and a missing tooth, and he was deeply bruised. It is claimed that Cook was hung from an upstairs window by his feet, that his feet were beaten until he could not stand, that he was tied to a chair and beaten, that he was deprived of sleep, and that a revolver was forced into his mouth and the trigger pulled in a mock execution. Cook's lawyers were said to be pushing for the release of a television video report which

[Dr. Robert Spink]

allegedly showed police beating Cook. Those lawyers were involved in a tragic accident involving a front tyre blow-out which, incidentally, it is claimed has never been properly investigated by the police. In that untimely accident, Dr. da Silva was killed and Dr. Coelho was severely injured.

What of the final piece of the early evidence—Cook's record as a child molester? It too is quite bogus. At the trial, the police tried to rescue some credibility on the point. An officer said that Cook had been seen abusing a child a few weeks before Rachel's murder. One might wonder why that was not mentioned at the time. Nevertheless, the judge asked the officer how he knew that. The officer replied that someone, unnamed, had told him. The judge accepted that so-called "evidence" as clear and unequivocal. I must inform the House that I know of no evidence that Cook has ever posed any threat to children.

I do know of evidence suggesting that Cook is safe and trustworthy with children. I am not aware of any conspiracy and I make no allegations. However, it must be said that Cook was a good target to be "fitted up". He has a minor criminal record and he was working unregistered on the Algarve in the motor trade. Indeed, he may have hung himself as his initial account to the police of his movements could have been inconsistent because he thought that he was being questioned about a petty crime.

Let me return to the old gardener—there is always an old gardener in such tales. He changed his story at least twice; his memory, it seems, was greatly assisted by the police. The car was indeed red and foreign, he said; but so was Rachel's stepfather's car, and many others in the area. He also saw Cook talking to Rachel. Cook was, he said, wearing sunglasses, although it would have been almost dark at the time.

The gardener had no difficulty, however, in picking out Cook from an identification parade—at least, not after the police had specifically pointed Cook out to him, asking, "Is that the man?" Not that that was necessary; Cook was a white, 5-ft-tall, slightly built Englishman, while the rest of the parade consisted of burly, dark, Portuguese policemen who were obviously of Mediterranean origin.

Hon. Members may be horrified to learn that, much earlier than that parade—indeed, the day after the body was found—Cook was shown to the gardener by the local police, and the gardener said that Cook was not the man whom he had seen on the fateful day in question. He changed his story. Clearly, the police case needed boosting, so the most incredible thing happened: a reconstruction of the crime was forced on Cook.

The police said that, in the reconstruction, Cook had shown them the exact positions in which they had found Rachel's school bag and shoes. They said that those items had been thrown by Cook from a fast-moving car over many kilometres on a country road down which he can seldom have been before, some weeks after the alleged event. Even the police blushed when they told that one in court.

Let me now review the harrowing scene of the crime. Again, I sincerely apologise to the victim's family, but this has to be done. A pathologist stated that Rachel struggled furiously for her life in the front passenger seat of a car; it took four to eight minutes to kill her by strangulation. Rachel naturally fought hard, and had the blood of her murderer under her fingernails.

No sophisticated DNA or type matching of the samples was ever presented to court. No evidence was ever presented even to show the simple blood group of the murderer. Such basic blood-group evidence could not have proved that Cook was the murderer, but it could most assuredly have proved his innocence. Hon. Members may feel very uncomfortable about the fact that that evidence was lost, and we should ask why it was lost—or, worse, why it was not used.

What, then, of the other forensic evidence? We can all imagine the horrific struggle—that frantic four or eight minutes. Surely the car would exhibit many clues; law experts feel that that must be so. Incredibly, however, not a single link was found between Cook's car and Rachel, or her clothes. *The Sunday Times* stated:

> "Not a single hair, fibre, bloodstain or sign of damage was found in Cook's car. And Police did not find it unusual that Cook had not cleaned the entire car in an effort to erase prints . . . When the body was found, no forensic search was made of the area and no tests were carried out on a bloodstain seen under a fingernail. The body was cremated within days and without extensive forensic examination."

Therefore, the defence was denied the possibility of conducting the necessary independent tests. Is not that beyond belief?

Let me now turn to the pathologist's evidence, starting with the astonishing point that the report was tampered with. It has lost—for ever, it seems—its important front page, which gave, among other information, the time of death. The pathologist, apparently, is now unavailable.

The Sunday Times reported:

> "Such post mortem work that was done was minimal".

However, a pathologist hired by the defence who examined Rachel's organs said that she might have been killed 24 or 30 hours before her body was discovered, which apparently indicates that she may have been held alive by her murderer for up to two days. She was discovered four days after she disappeared. Cook was first in police hands the day after she disappeared.

That brings us to the alibi evidence and suggests that Cook had the best possible alibi—he was in very close contact with or in the custody of the police, but the judges dismissed that, the pathologist's evidence. Moreover, there was the condition of Rachel and her clothes when found. They were clean and dry. That is consistent with the defence pathologist's findings. The weather had been dry the day Rachel was found, but the previous days had been wet, thus suggesting that Rachel had been dumped only the day she was found.

That evidence was also disallowed by the judges. They chose, as they can under Portuguese law, to refuse to hear some evidence. In a trivial case, that may have been justified, but, in the circumstances, hon. Members may feel that that was an extraordinary piece of selectivity. What is even more remarkable, though, is that the person who found Rachel's body was never called to give evidence, and therefore his evidence was denied to the defence.

Additional alibi evidence comes from Cook's workmates, who saw him a maximum of 10 minutes after he was said to be seen by the man on the horse at the place of the body. The times were precise and checked, but the distance of the two sightings put them a minimum of 12 minutes

apart, with no allowance for any other activity at all. That would have been impossible to achieve. That evidence was also rejected.

According to the pathologist, Rachel was strangled with a nylon rope. A nylon rope, a jumper matching the one Rachel was wearing and a blanket which was covered with pine needles, as was Rachel's body, were all seen in a car, but not Cook's car. They were seen in Rachel's stepfather's red foreign car. The police did not investigate or use that evidence.

The stepfather certainly had a violent nature at times. Rachel's mother was said by a neighbour sometimes to flee to her home for sanctuary with the neigbour and to stay there with her overnight out of fear of her stepfather's violence. Several people say that they saw scratch marks on the side of the stepfather's face and his arm the day after Rachel disappeared. Some have pointed a finger at the stepfather, but the House cannot and must not assume anything—that would be quite wrong. In a further twist, the stepfather died tragically precisely one year to the day after Rachel was killed, the third death in this story. Therefore, his confession cannot be tested. I raise those points not to incriminate in any way Rachel's stepfather but only to illustrate, as is my clear duty, the late evening shadow of doubt which is cast over the conviction of my constituent.

I now refer briefly to the trial and verdict. We have seen that there was no jury and that the three judges were local. They were inexperienced in trying such an unusual case. In Portugal, judges are able to dictate entirely what evidence they will admit and what they will refuse even to hear. With so much evidence lost, destroyed or refused by the judges, Cook's trial was fatally flawed.

The basis of the judges' verdict was made clear in their summing-up. There was a total lack of hard forensic evidence, but sadly there was no lack of hearsay. For instance, members of the Portuguese Institute of Fingerprints told the court the judges said "with conviction", that Cook's way of life and his friendship with Rachel's family indicated that he was the murderer. Sadly, those fingerprint experts produced no fingerprint evidence.

The judges implied that no motive whatsoever was found, and Cook was not accused of any particular motive. There was no sexual interference of any kind with Rachel. In Portuguese law, first-degree murder requires a motive and premeditation, I understand. They seemed curiously absent. The judges said nothing of substance that I can find in the translation of their summary, except that, as Cook knew the family, he must be the murderer. I turn, briefly, to the appeal. The hearing may not take place until June 1993. That delay, would be intolerable. The appeal cannot question the evidence produced at the trial. That evidence, such as it is, with all its flaws, is considered to be irrefutable. For instance, the police evidence that Cook was a child molester cannot be questioned. Yet we know that it should be.

In the appeal lawyers may question only the admissibility of the evidence under Portuguese law. That raises yet a further grave misgiving because incredibly Cook and his lawyers are not allowed to attend the appeal. Those in the House who believe that justice should be seen to be done may be staggered by that revelation. As my predecessor Sir Bernard Braine wrote:

"There is little likelihood that even by the Appeal justice will be done".

Presumably the matter can be argued in the European Court later. Meanwhile, I have three objectives for the debate. First, I wish to bring pressure on the Portuguese authorities about the possible miscarriage of justice and to allow the earliest possible appeal consistent with a fair and safe hearing. Secondly, I wish to prevent any torture or mistreatment of Cook and to signal to all nations that human rights must be upheld. Thirdly, I wish to thank the Foreign Office for its help and advice so far, which has been professional and appropriate—no blame can lie with it—and I ask the Minister to provide a monthly written report from the British consular staff on Cook's physical and mental condition. In addition to those three things, I seek a general review of the help which consular staff give to British citizens arrested abroad.

In summary, there are substantial grounds to believe that a miscarriage of justice may have occurred. First, the conduct of the police investigation is in question. Secondly, the conduct of the trial and the basis of the verdict are in question. Thirdly, I place full trust in the Portuguese justice system to ensure that the appeal is fair. Fourthly, there are grounds to question the physical and mental treatment of Cook. Fifthly, the European Court and the European human rights body may eventually need to intervene if the appeal cannot answer the many questions raised. But I trust that that will not be necessary.

I understand that Cook is considering starting a hunger strike. That would hamper my efforts and I most strongly urge him not to do so, particularly in his poor physical condition. We are told that he is prematurely grey. His bodyweight is down to seven stones. He is skeletal. He has three ulcers. His remaining teeth are rotted. He is withdrawn and paranoid. As a child murderer he has suffered many attacks in prison. He bears two knife scars and many burns scars to prove it. He is alone in a foreign gaol, unable to speak the language. He needs our help. But I stress again that we cannot judge the case from our position here.

I sincerely thank the Minister for his advice and support so far, which is also much appreciated by the family. All British citizens must know that, when their back is against the wall and all seems lost and they feel that the world has deserted them, there is a place—this honourable House—where their basic human rights will be upheld and that there are men and women who will fight for their rights, including their right to a fair trial. My fight does not end here tonight. Here, indeed, it begins.

12.43 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): The House will be grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) for bringing this important case to its attention. I note the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall), who represents his constituent, the mother of Rachel Charles.

I should like to outline the action taken by Her Majesty's Government on behalf of Michael Cook and his family since his arrest. On 5 December 1990 the British consulate in Portimao was informed that Michael Cook had been arrested the previous day for the murder of Rachel Charles. The consulate was told that he had confessed and would be taken before a judge on 6 December to be formally charged. The Portimao consul visited him on 6 December. On that occasion he said that

[Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd]

he was being well treated and had no complaints. A Portuguese police officer was present throughout that meeting.

On 10 December the Portimao consul had a private meeting with Michael Cook. On that occasion Mr. Cook said that he had been beaten twice: once when detained for questioning on 22 November and subsequently after his arrest on 4 December. He said that he had confessed under duress. He claimed to have been beaten on the chest and feet; this, he said, explained why there were no signs of ill treatment.

On the following day, at the consul's insistence, Michael Cook was asked by the prison staff whether he wished to see a doctor so that a formal complaint about his mistreatment could be made. He declined to do so. Also on 11 December the British consul in Lisbon told Mr. Cook's Portuguese lawyer that the embassy would make a formal complaint if Mr. Cook wished. The offer was not taken up either by the lawyer or by Mr. Cook during subsequent visits by the Portimao consul. Thus, no medical examination to substantiate the allegations or otherwise took place.

From 11 December 1990 to 30 January 1992 when his trial began, Michael Cook was visited seven more times by consular officials. He complained once, in February 1991, of having been threatened verbally by other inmates, but said that the threats had ceased. Twice he complained of suffering from mental stress and three times from ulcer problems. The British consul on those occasions sought and received assurances from the prison governor that Mr. Cook would receive the necessary treatment.

The consuls from Lisbon and Portimao attended the first day of Michael Cook's trial, and the Portimao consul attended the last day, 7 February 1992.

On 19 February Michael Cook's brother, Colin Cook, rang the embassy in Lisbon to say that he had heard that Michael Cook had been stabbed in prison in Faro. The embassy immediately made inquiries. It was assured that Michael Cook had not been stabbed, although he had been involved in an argument over cigarettes with another prisoner.

The following day the vice-consul from Lisbon visited Mr. Cook. Although physically all right, he was understandably extremely upset over the trial verdict. The prison governor gave assurances for Mr. Cook's safety. On 4 March 1992, Michael Cook was transferred to Coimbra high security prison, about 110 miles north of Lisbon.

During that month, the consul and vice-consul drew the attention of officials at the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the great degree of British ministerial, official and public concern about Michael Cook's case. On 8 March *The Sunday Times* published an article reporting that Mr. Cook had been ill treated at the hands of other prisoners. The pro-consul in Lisbon looked into those allegations without delay. He contacted the prison governor on 10 March to register the embassy's concern for Michael Cook's safety and welfare. He was assured that there was no evidence of ill-treatment.

Later that day, the vice-consul spoke to Mr. Cook by telephone. Mr. Cook said that one inmate—not a cellmate—had uttered a verbal threat, but that he had not been physically attacked. He mentioned that he was suffering from a stomach ulcer and had dental problems. In response to this, the vice-consul said that the embassy would write to the prison governor about these problems. A letter was sent on 13 March.

On 6 April Coimbra prison confirmed to the embassy that Michael Cook had been given a full-time job in the prison car paint workshop. It also confirmed that he had seen a doctor about his ulcer and had been put on a special diet. He had also seen a dentist.

On 16 April, the consul visited Michael Cook for two hours in a private room. Mr. Cook confirmed that he had gained some weight as a result of his special diet, and did not wish to have any matter raised with the prison authorities.

Michael Cook recently told his parents that he had been taken to see a psychiatrist. He was under the impression that the prison was trying to have him committed to a mental home, which would make it even more difficult for him to prove his innocence. Coimbra prison has told the consul that Michael Cook did not in fact see a psychiatrist. He was taken to see a specialist about his stomach ulcer. Unfortunately, it appears that the prison mistakenly translated "specialist" for "psychiatrist" when talking to Mr. Cook. The consul will visit Mr. Cook again on 19 June.

I have described the full support given by the consuls in Portimao and Lisbon. Prisoners Abroad, an admirable organisation run by our former colleague in the House, Keith Best, has been in regular contact with Michael Cook and is giving him full support.

I know that Michael Cook, his family and others believe that there has been a miscarriage of justice. I can well understand their concern, but, whatever we may think, it would be wrong for me to express an opinion on the conduct of the trial while an appeal is pending. If the lawyers believe that the case has not been dealt with in accordance with Portuguese law, it is their responsibility to take appropriate steps. Portuguese law provides for this and, indeed, the lawyers have submitted an appeal on Michael Cook's behalf. They have told the British embassy that the Portuguese supreme court has accepted the appeal and that, in their view, the appeal process is proceeding satisfactorily.

On 19 February Colin Cook complained to the British consul in Lisbon that the trial violated article 6 of the European convention on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. On examination, he agreed that the European convention can be brought into play only when all local remedies have been exhausted. We are keeping in close touch with Mr. Cook's lawyers and the Portuguese authorities. We are asking them to do what they can to ensure that Michael Cook's appeal is heard by the supreme court with the minimum delay. Our ambassador in Lisbon wrote to the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 3 June to press this point, and I will be in touch with my hon. Friend as soon as I have a reply.

I fully appreciate my hon. Friend's concern about this case, but I hope that he will understand from what I have said that we cannot intervene until the Portuguese legal process has taken its course. Until then we shall, through our consular officials, continue to visit Mr. Cook regularly and to offer him and his family all the support that we properly can. I shall continue to keep my hon. Friend fully informed.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 10 June 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

PRICE'S PATENT CANDLE COMPANY LIMITED BILL *[Lords]*

ULSTER BANK BILL *[Lords]*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Europe Open for Business

1. **Mr. French:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many businesses have responded to his Department's Europe Open for Business initiative.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Richard Needham): More than 400,000 requests for information have been received by the European Open for Business campaign since March 1988, including 266,000 calls to the hotline.

Mr. French: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the success of this initiative. What further measures does he propose to assist business after January, when the market starts? What representations has he received from business about the way in which it feels it can best be assisted to take the greatest advantage of single market opportunities?

Mr. Needham: I will pass my hon. Friend's congratulations to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry, who must take the credit as I was in other parts during the successful campaign. There is an immense amount to be done, not least in the enforcement and implementation of the single market. In the summer I shall certainly have discussions with industry about how we can develop the next part of our strategy for ensuring that British industry can take advantage of the single market and that the single market is working effectively.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister think it part of the success of the European Open for Business campaign that thousands of British jobs, including precious high-tech jobs from INMOS in my constituency, are being syphoned off to European countries? Why has his Department built a Chinese wall around itself, refusing to reply to messages from hon. Members and the managing director of INMOS who are begging the Department to set up practical partnership arrangements with INMOS to save high-tech jobs that have a great future? If France and Italy are prepared to invest in British industry and technology, why is the Department not prepared to?

Mr. Needham: As far as I am aware, the hon. Gentleman has not yet been on the telephone to me. The number is 215 4301, and there is no Chinese wall around my office. The single market presents enormous opportunities for our industry. Now that Britain has returned a Conservative Government who are setting the right atmosphere and the right mood of confidence for industry, thousands of jobs will be created.

Mr. Adley: As one who has been on the telephone to my hon. Friend at the weekend about a company in my constituency, may I thank him for his assiduous attention to duty? At an early date, will he give me a report by telephone or note about the progress that he is able to offer the company, Lovaux, on its current problems?

Mr. Needham: I shall phone my hon. Friend later this afternoon.

Recession

2. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he next plans to meet representatives of the south-east CBI to discuss the effects of the recession on industry.

The President of the Board of Trade and secretary of State for Trade and industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): I have no meetings planned with the CBI's south-east regional council in the immediate future, although I met the CBI's national manufacturing council on 29 April and I often meet individual CBI member companies.

Mr. Gapes: Why, given the jobs crisis in the south-east, has the Minister no such meetings planned? In view of the crisis in docklands and especially in Canary Wharf, the difficulties with the channel tunnel project and his so-called initiatives for east London corridors—we do not hear much about them at the moment—why is he doing nothing to deal with the serious jobs crisis in my constituency, where 4,600 people are out of work and the total is rising every month? One in nine people is out of work and we want jobs now.

Mr. Heseltine: I think that the hon. Gentleman misstates the contribution that the Government have made. We have brought down interest rates by 5 per cent. over the past 12 months and secured a level of inflation that is extremely attractive compared with that of our competitors. Above all else, to help the recovery of our economy we have kept the Labour party out of power.

Dr. Hampson: Does my right hon. Friend intend to explain to the CBI the significance of his adopting the title President of the Board of Trade? Does the board, which is potentially the most powerful of all Cabinet Committees, now meet?

Mr. Heseltine: The Board of Trade has not met for many decades, except in a celebratory mode to commemorate its 200 years of success. If it were to meet, it would be attended by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who would doubtless give inspiration to those Opposition Members who are looking for an industrial strategy.

Mr. Gordon Brown: I welcome the Minister to his new post. Will he confirm that, despite what he says, his Insolvency Service is predicting that insolvencies will rise to 35,000 this year? That will represent an appalling 60 per cent. increase in the number of business failures. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the industrial policy that he once supported included investment in a research tax credit, a training levy, strengthened regional policy and reorganised export services, all measures that should be implemented immediately? Will he explain why action man is failing to act? Has the right hon. Gentleman exchanged his principles for his presidency?

Mr. Heseltine: I have merely exchanged the Department of the Environment for the Department of Trade and Industry. The hon. Gentleman is fully aware that his ideas were very much the discussion basis of the recent general election. Having failed to persuade the country, it is extremely unlikely that he can persuade the House.

Mr. John Marshall: I congratulate my right hon. Friend and his colleagues on the reductions in interest rates that have already taken place. May I humbly suggest to him that a further reduction may well be necessary?

Mr. Heseltine: I shall take the liberty of passing on my hon. Friend's views to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Regeneration

3. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will next meet representatives of the TUC and of the south-east region of the CBI to discuss prospects for regeneration.

Mr. Heseltine *rose—[Interruption.]* The answer is worth waiting for. I have no such plans at present.

Mr. Mackinlay: If the President were to meet representatives of employers and workers in south-east England, what excuses would he advance for the record number of liquidations in the first quarter of the year and for the fact that 800 jobs are being lost in the region every day? What excuse would he offer to Essex man and Essex woman, who are enduring unemployment of 66,000 in their county this year?

Mr. Heseltine: I would offer no excuse. I would merely say that the country has to fight its way out of one of the worst recessions that we have seen since the war, and that it must do that against a background of all similar capitalist nations facing similar problems. The only way in which we shall succeed in fighting our way out is to excel in the increasingly competitive world that we face.

Mr. Rowe: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in the part of the south-east that I represent the Government are already showing clear signs that they recognise the certainty that Kent will lead the regeneration of the region? They are already spending millions of pounds on the necessary infrastructure. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that all the forecasts suggest that the volume of trade passing through and settling in Kent will be such that Kent will need to receive continued Government support?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is right to ask that question. The level of Government support is substantial in terms of the infrastructure plans that are already under way and those that will unfold as the decade proceeds. It is a fact that the part of south-east England that my hon. Friend represents is bound to benefit enormously from the completion of the single European market. The scale of the benefit will depend very much on the entrepreneurial ability of British companies to react to it.

Electricity Generation

5. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consulations he has had with the chairman of British Coal concerning future long-term contracts with the electricity generating companies.

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): I meet the chairman of British Coal on regular occasions and discuss a variety of issues.

Mr. Hall: That is a remarkable answer from a Department that now claims to be interventionist in industrial policy. Is the President of the Board of Trade aware that, before the privatisation of the electricity generating industry, it was announced that Fiddlers Ferry, a coal-fired power station in my constituency, was to use 2 million tonnes of imported low-sulphur coal a year? That would serve only to worsen our balance of trade deficit and to threaten jobs in the Lancashire coalfield, where Parkside is the only remaining pit, and it would leave us with sulphur dioxide emissions of 70,000 tonnes a year. Will the right hon. Gentleman now take urgent action to reduce coal imports, negotiate with British Coal to ensure that the power generating companies have a long-term coal plan, stop the dash for gas, invest in clean coal technology and rein back opencast mining?

Mr. Eggar: No. It is not an appropriate role for Government to stop coal imports, nor could we under our international obligations. However, I am confident of British Coal's ability at some collieries, particularly at the inland coal generating plants, to compete with coal imports. It must be the priority of all hon. Members to ensure that British Coal becomes world competitive. I am confident that it can.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Is my hon. Friend aware that it is the size of the contracts to be concluded between the coal industry and the generators, not the shape of the privatisation, that will determine the size of the coal industry in the future? Can he tell the House when he expects those contracts to be concluded?

Mr. Eggar: I am aware, as I am sure the House is, of the importance of those commercial contracts to the future structure and size of the British coal industry. I understand that negotiations are taking place between the generating companies and British Coal and the regional electricity companies and the generating companies. They are commercial negotiations, but I am taking a close interest in them.

Mr. Redmond: What discussions has the Minister had with the chairman of British Coal on importing dirty fuel?

Mr. Eggar: As I have already said, I have had a number of discussions with the chairman of British Coal on a variety of matters. As the hon. Gentleman will be aware,

British Coal has alleged that coal has been dumped by certain countries, and those allegations are with the European Commission.

Dr. Michael Clark: Does my hon. Friend agree that one way to ensure that long-term contracts for British coal continue is to ensure that research and development into efficient and clean coal-burn technology continues? Does my hon. Friend have plans to ensure that our lead in that area is maintained, even after privatisation, by ensuring that the Coal Research Establishment at Stoke Orchard survives?

Mr. Eggar: I am well aware of the importance that my hon. Friend and others attach to clean coal and new coal-burning technologies and we shall take that into account as we go through the consultation process on the road to privatisation.

Mr. Dobson: Does the Minister recall that the Government's merchant bank advisers, Rothschild, advised the Secretary of State to intervene directly in the negotiations between the generators and British Coal to ensure that British Coal obtained high-take, long-term contracts? Will the hon. Gentleman take that advice and intervene; or is this yet another example of his having no such plans at the moment?

Mr. Eggar: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has been listening. I made it clear that I understood that commercial discussions and negotiations were going on. I also made it clear that I am keeping a close watch on them.

Mr. Oppenheim: Would not limits on coal imports effectively be placing the interests of the coal industry above those of its customers, which include many energy-intensive industries employing millions of people in jobs which may well be lost if those industries are forced to rely on high-price domestic coal? Are not such trade barriers ultimately self-defeating—first for the protected industry which simply becomes cosseted and inefficient, secondly for its customers, who have to buy high-priced goods, and thirdly for the economy as a whole?

Mr. Eggar: As usual, my hon. Friend has put his point effectively and well. We are doing no one any favours by artificially raising energy prices both for the domestic consumer and for the major energy users. I remind my hon. Friend that, since 1979, the Government have made about £17 billion available to British Coal; that works out at a third of a million pounds for every one of the 50,000 people now employed in collieries, and it shows the extent of the subsidies and other assistance given to British Coal by this Government.

Monopolies and Mergers

6. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent representations he has received on policy for monopolies and mergers within the banking and financial sector.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): I have received a number of representations on the bid for the Midland bank by the Hong Kong and Shanghai banking corporation, and on the possible offer made by Lloyds bank, which has now been withdrawn.

Mr. Watson: The threat of a Lloyds takeover of the Midland bank has now been withdrawn, but had the takeover gone ahead it would have posed a threat to thousands of jobs and, possibly, hundreds of bank branches. Will the President of the Board of Trade take account of his own advice now that he is Secretary of State? According to that advice, in the event of a takeover bid involving a company with more than 500 employees, that company should involve its employees in consultation plans with a view to implementation of the takeover, and the bidder should be required to show that any benefit resulting from the takeover would be in the wider national interest.

Why did the President of the Board of Trade show such interest in takeovers before he returned to government, and why, now that he is back in government, has no Government action been taken on this important matter?

Mr. Hamilton: The Government take the national interest into account in all mergers and takeovers. If the Lloyds bid had gone ahead, it would have been examined by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which would have considered both its benefits and its disadvantages. The Government's policy is perfectly clear; it is as it always has been. We look to competition, but not exclusively to competition: the national interest may well be wider.

Mr. Quentin Davies: I welcome the likelihood that, for the foreseeable future, there will be four rather than three clearing banks in England and Wales. But are my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade happy that those four banks should have 90 per cent. of the corporate lending market? Has not that effective oligopoly enabled the banks to achieve a remarkable success in driving through an increase in their margins and charges at a time of falling loan demand, in a recession? Will my hon. Friend ask the Office of Fair Trading to take a thorough look at the whole position?

Mr. Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has asked the Director General of Fair Trading to keep that question under review. My hon. Friend will be aware that, last year, the director general considered whether there was any evidence of collusion, anti-competitive practice or exploitative behaviour by the banks in their relations with small businesses. He concluded at that time that there were no grounds for action under competition legislation, but it is open to him to institute an investigation at any time if he thinks fit.

Petroleum Engineering Department

7. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to relocate the petroleum engineering department from London to Aberdeen.

Mr. Eggar: The arguments for and against relocating the Department's petroleum specialists to Aberdeen are being considered in depth by independent consultants. I await their report and conclusions.

Mrs. Fyfe: Has not the consultation being going on for a considerable time? If it is not obvious that the PED should be relocated in Aberdeen, will the Minister tell us what factors are persuading him that that may not be a good idea?

Mr. Eggar: The independent consultants' study has begun, and I hope to receive the results in August. We are committed to publishing it, and I shall of course take account of its findings in reaching a final decision.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Will my hon. Friend refer the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) to the Scottish Conservative manifesto? It stated unequivocally that, should the independent inquiry say yes to relocation, the Government were committed to relocating the PED, and that in the meantime it would be entirely wrong to pre-empt the inquiry.

Mr. Eggar: I agree, and I pay tribute to the energy with which my hon. Friend has made me aware of his concerns —and those of his constituents—about the relocation of the PED.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Will the Minister assure the House that the comments that he made on Monday about the high cost of operating in Aberdeen were not an attempt to soften us up for the decision not to relocate to Aberdeen? Does he accept that the industry would like the jobs to be located in Aberdeen, as that would increase efficiency? The comparison with America, therefore, is hardly relevant. Will he put pressure on the Scottish Office to make the necessary infrastructure investment in north-east Scotland, which would help to reduce operating costs?

Mr. Eggar: I assure the hon. Gentleman that the comments that I made in Aberdeen about the potential long-term problem of moving to Aberdeen's higher-cost base do not show that I have formed any view about the PED. I am deliberately keeping an open mind until I receive the consultants' report.

Mr. Robert Hughes: On a point of order, Madam Speaker——

Madam Speaker: Order. I shall take points of order later.

Ealing Enterprise

8. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what funding his Department has provided to Ealing Enterprise; and what estimate he has made of the number of jobs created.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Edward Leigh): Ealing Enterprise received pump priming in its start-up phase and is now supported by the West London training and enterprise council.

Mr. Greenway: Is my hon. Friend aware that Ealing Enterprise was founded by me and that it has been a source of many jobs for my constituents and others? Will he put more money into it and commend its excellent example to other parts of the country?

Mr. Leigh: Most Members are just Members, but my hon. Friend is Mr. Ealing. The whole House will recognise that he is one of the most dedicated and conscientious constituency Members. The enterprise agency that he founded has been successful. It has been helped by us in the past and it has created more than 1,200 jobs. Enterprise agencies are central to our strategy of creating the enterprise culture which so transformed the economy in the 1980s and resulted in there now being more than 3 million businesses in this country.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte report on inward investment relate to London, and in particular to Ealing, in the same way as it relates to the northern region, in so far as it makes recommendations about assisted area status? What is the report's status? Is it a consultative document? Will it be debated by the House before Ministers make recommendations? Will we have the opportunity to question Ministers on the contents of the report, which has major implications for my constituents?

Mr. Leigh: One thing is absolutely certain: the report has nothing to do with Ealing Enterprise.

GATT

9. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress has been made in the general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations.

Mr. Needham: Talks are continuing between the United States and the European Community to try to resolve their remaining differences, principally over agriculture. That is essential to open the way to wider agreement in the round.

Mr. Taylor: Has my hon. Friend noted the forecast that a successful conclusion of the GATT talks could lead to an increase in world trade in goods and services of £110 billion a year? With the safeguards for countries in the developing world, might not the benefits of such a successful conclusion be far more in the long-term interest of those countries than the discussions in Rio, with all the media attention focused on them? May we have more media attention focused on the GATT round?

Mr. Needham: I entirely agree that a successful outcome to the GATT round would lead to an increase in trade, as suggested by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, of £110 billion. That wealth creation can produce the tax stream that can do so much to improve the lot of the third world and, above all, its terrible environmental problems.

Mr. Madden: To ensure confidence in the British textile and clothing industry, will the Minister say when the Government will announce a further extension to the multi-fibre arrangement?

Mr. Needham: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the multi-fibre arrangement will finish at the end of this year, and the method of replacing it is tied up with the GATT negotiations. I still believe that it is probable rather than possible that we shall be able to reach some agreement on GATT, but, failing that, I assure him that the Government will ensure that arrangements are put in place to cover the future of the MFA.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

10. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to review the legislation preventing a Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry reconvening to review the effect of its recommendations.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Where appropriate, the Director General of Fair Trading may be asked to review the effectiveness of measures taken following a report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. He also has a general duty to keep markets under review. Where he has concerns about the competitive situation, he may ask the MMC to look again at markets that have been the subject of previous investigation by the commission.

Mr. Field: May I be the first Conservative Member to congratulate my hon. Friend on his appointment? As he saved the nation from the roof tax in a memorable speech, I hope that I can invite him to save the nation from a number of perverse decisions by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission—such as the decision on the brewers, which has thoroughly upset all the landlords and beer drinkers of the nation, the decision on gas prices which has put the horticulturalists in a parlous state, and the report on Isle of Wight ferries which said that we had the most expensive ferries in the world but drew no conclusions. Will my hon. Friend either amend the legislation so that in future the Monopolies and Mergers Commission must reconvene within nine months to reconsider the results of its actions, or abolish that last reservoir of state-subsidised socialism for ever?

Mr. Hamilton: I cannot satisfy my hon. Friend on his last point, but he may be aware that the chairmanship of the commission becomes vacant later in the year. If he would like to apply for the job, he might be able to sort it out himself.

Recession

11. **Mr. Kilfoyle:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from businesses in the north-west concerning the effects of the recession on industry.

Mr. Heseltine: Ministers and officials of my Department receive considerable correspondence about the state of business in the north-west.

Mr. Kilfoyle: Given that two Tory recessions have cost a third of a million manufacturing jobs in the north-west and that last year 4,130 businesses in the north-west went bust—a 54 per cent. increase on the previous year—would not Ministers be better served by changing their approach and policies rather than the title of their Department?

Mr. Heseltine: It is curious that the hon. Gentleman should ask me that question when, if his party had been elected to government, it would by now have refused to order the fourth Trident submarine and be threatening the nuclear industry in the north-west and slaughtering the defence budget on which so many companies there depend.

Mrs. Peacock: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the importance of the GATT negotiations not only to the textile industry in the north-west, but to Yorkshire. Can he assure the House that the Government will retain their robust position on the GATT round in the hope of a successful outcome for textiles as well as agriculture?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend raises perhaps the most important opportunity facing our companies. We are committed to doing everything in our power to press our colleagues to reach an early conclusion to the GATT round, and I assure my hon. Friend that we shall continue to do so.

Mr. Hoyle: As the President of the Board of Trade has taken that rather pompous title, does it mean that he is no longer bothered about industry and energy, or can he tell the people of the north-west what he intends to do about all the industry that has been destroyed by the Government and about the last remaining pit which is hanging on by a thread?

Mr. Heseltine: The fact that the hon. Gentleman somehow thinks that trade has nothing to do with industry or the price of energy is a devastating revelation of the ignorance of the attitudes of the Labour party.

Mr. Sumberg: Does my right hon. Friend recall that before the election the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) came to the House to forecast doom and gloom for the north-west, saying that there would not be one Conservative seat left and that we should be completely decimated in that area? Should we not therefore take his forecasts with a large pinch of salt?

Mr. Heseltine: I have not kept such a beady eye on the hon. Gentleman as my hon. Friend has. Perhaps I shall do so in the future, although on mature reflection I very much doubt whether I shall.

Regional Policy

12. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the Government's regional policy.

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): The Government remain committed to an effective, well-focused regional policy.

Mr. Hutton: Does the Minister agree that an important element of an effective regional policy for Britain in the 1990s, unlike the statement that he has just made, would include specific and targeted measures to help constituencies such as mine which are dependent on defence-related spending? Is he aware that tens of thousands of jobs in the defence industry have been lost since 1990? When will he present to the House a range of specific policies which will offer a reasonable prospect of secure employment to people in my constituency?

Mr. Sainsbury: I assure the hon. Gentleman that employment opportunities will be the major factor that we shall take into account in our review of the assisted areas map. The implications for employment opportunities of cutbacks in defence spending will be fully taken into account, along with all other relevant factors.

Mr. Knapman: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that business and commerce should always be based where they are most efficient, and that we therefore have no national cohesion policy?

Mr. Sainsbury: I assure my hon. Friend that the Government do not intend to try to dictate to industry or commerce where they should go. I recall industrial development certificates and, even more horrific, office development permits. I dare say that if the Labour party had its way we might return to those bad days.

Mr. John D. Taylor: As employment in the regions could be improved at a stroke by reducing interest rates, why does the Minister continue to support the exchange rate mechanism, which freezes those opportunities?

Mr. Sainsbury: Interest rates have some influence on industry's decisions on investment and expansion, but currency stability also has a great influence, as do many other factors. The right hon. Gentleman would do well to take that into account.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my right hon. Friend is examining the policies, will he look carefully at travel-to-work areas? In particular, will he note that in my constituency a travel-to-work area was created some years ago embracing Blairgowrie, Pitlochry and Aberfeldy? Anyone who knows the highland parts of Perthshire knows that it is nonsensical to describe that as a travel-to-work area.

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend must be the most knowledgeable person about those areas, and I admit that I should like to know them better than I do. However, travel-to-work areas will be the basic building block of the review of the assisted areas map and there will be no fresh census data on which to reassess those areas until 1994. That would leave the review too late.

Ms. Quin: In his book, "Where There's a Will", the President of the Board of Trade called for an active regional and industrial policy, but other DTI Ministers in the past have supported the anti-regional policies of the No Turning Back group. Will the Minister give a clear statement today that the DTI is turning its back on the No Turning Back group for good?

Mr. Sainsbury: I assure the hon. Lady, as I said in my original answer, that we have had and will continue to have not only an effective regional policy but an active one.

Mr. Michael Brown: May I draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend the fact that when my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) was in charge of regional policy up to the general election he promoted Government regional policy in my constituency by ensuring a Government grant of more than £12 million to the Kimberley-Clark factory, resulting in more than 750 jobs to be created next year——

Madam Speaker: Order. What is the question?

Mr. Brown: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the presence in his Department of a distinguished member of the No Turning Back group clearly proves the Government's commitment to regional policy?

Mr. Sainsbury: I share my hon. Friend's admiration for the skill with which our hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) carried out his responsibilities for regional policy and I am glad to follow such an excellent record.

Coal Prices

13. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy towards the attempts being made by the European Commission to establish a reference price for coal.

Mr. Eggar: The Commission has put forward preliminary ideas on reference prices for coal as a device to restrain excessive levels of subsidies for coal mining in some member states. There is no suggestion that the Commission intends to subsidise Community coal production so that it is all sold at a reference price level. We support the Commission's aim of reducing unjustifiable subsidies.

Mr. Williams: Is there not an appalling unfairness and absurdity in the fact that Britain, which produces the cheapest coal in Europe, is running down its coal industry while Germany, whose coal production is twice as expensive, is providing massive subsidies? What are the British Government doing to open up Europe's coal market?

Mr. Eggar: I have made it clear that the European Commission is as concerned as we are about the subsidies offered to some coal-producing member states and has made proposals to reduce the level of subsidies which it currently pays. Although we have some doubts about the precise proposals, we support the broad thrust of the Commission's suggestions.

Mr. Gallie: Will my hon. Friend and the House take note in response to an earlier question that Scotland is a supplier of low sulphur coal? May I welcome my hon. Friend's comments on the reference price and urge him to take urgent action to ensure that our coal can be sold on a level playing field with other coal produced in Europe?

Mr. Eggar: Yes, I share my hon. Friend's objective. Clearly, it is important that no artificial subsidies are available which distort market pricing.

Mr. Morgan: In the light of the President of the Board of Trade's curiously forked-tongued speech yesterday to the annual conference of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, in which he said that he would not intervene in the relationships between British Coal and the two electricity generators, can the Minister tell the House what price and what length of coal supply contracts National Power and PowerGen should sign with British Coal to ensure long-term security of supply, long-term viability for the coalfield communities and his long-term friendship with Roy Lynk?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman should do my right hon. Friend the courtesy of reading his speech, which clearly he has not, or—if he has—he has misinterpreted it. His latter question is a commercial matter for the generating companies and British Coal.

Textiles and Clothing

14. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has concerning the total value of exports by the textile and clothing industries in the first quarter of 1992.

Mr. Leigh: They were £1·2 billion.

Mr. Winterton: Although I am sure that the whole House will congratulate the textile and clothing industry on its record exports in the first three months of this year, does my hon. Friend accept that imports were also up, at a record £2·1 billion, that this important sector of our economy is finding it difficult to export to countries in Asia

and to the United States of America, which erected substantial barriers against us, and that overall we are, sadly, dangerously exporting our manufacturing base? What steps will my hon. Friend take to stand up for British industry and help the regeneration of our manufacturing base?

Mr. Leigh: As my hon. Friend is the Member of Parliament for manufacturing, we always welcome his positive, helpful statements on these occasions. No doubt he will have noted that since the early 1980s manufacturing output is up by a quarter, productivity by a half and exports by three quarters. He himself has pointed out that exports are up by a record 9 per cent. in the first quarter. Imports have declined by 1 per cent. in the past year. The key point is that the textile industry has successfully restructured, as my hon. Friend knows, into higher-valued lines which ensure that we are competitive on world markets. My hon. Friend and others and I must work together to ensure that we have a successful GATT round as we phase out multi-fibre arrangements and unfair subsidies.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Minister confirm that a successful GATT round with adequate arrangements for the textile and clothing industry, which employs 450,000 people in this country, including 12,000 directly in Bradford, does not mean an efficient, well-organised, high-investment industry asking for special treatment or favours but one that is simply asking for fair competition, an end to dumping, and the prevention of outward processing and the many other abuses that it has had to face from other countries? Will the Minister assure us that he will not allow the Government to let down the textile and clothing industry and cause further losses in a manufacturing industry which is vital for our nation?

Mr. Leigh: That was an excellent question and I agree with everything that the hon. Gentleman said. He is right that the textile industry is vital and successful, as we have seen in the increase in the value of exports. The challenge now is to ensure that we have a successful GATT round. I have no doubt that when my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade takes over the presidency of the trade part of the Community in July he will ensure a successful conclusion to the GATT round. I can assure the House that the Government are absolutely committed to a successful and competitive textile industry. Our textile industry now has nothing to fear from international competition because we are so competitive in the higher-valued brands. We shall ensure that MFAs are phased out fairly and properly.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Notwithstanding the excellent export performance of the textile industry, particularly carpet manufacturers, does my hon. Friend recognise that further progress in Europe depends on stopping national Governments giving illegal subsidies to various parts of their textile industries? For instance, five years on, £5 million has still not been repaid to the Belgium Government by Beaulieu, the world's biggest carpet manufacturer, and the Italian Government are still paying significant subsidies to textile machinery companies in Italy which are pricing British firms out of jobs.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The whole purpose of the GATT round and our negotiations with the EC is to prevent unfair subsidies.

Mr. Henderson: Since the Minister took over his new responsibilities, representatives of the textile and clothing industry will have made representations to him pointing out that that industry, perhaps more than any other, has been savaged by the current recession, with the loss of 70,000 jobs and perhaps many more job losses to come. Will the Minister accept, under his new boss, the responsibility that the Department of Trade and Industry and now the Board of Trade have to help companies to stop the job loss and to restructure their business? If the Minister accepts that responsibility, what measures does he propose?

Mr. Leigh: That is precisely what companies are doing. They are restructuring their business because they realise that output in western countries has had to decline over a long period as a result of increased competition from low-value areas. Unfortunately, that restructuring involves a loss of labour because it involves new machinery. I do not know what the Labour party's policy on these matters is. Clearly, it has no policy except to make vague generalisations about throwing money at the problem—a policy which has failed in the past and would fail again.

Mr. Tredinnick: Is my hon. Friend aware that the restructuring to which hon. Members have referred has come about largely because of the protection that the multi-fibre arrangement has given to companies, enabling them to make changes and to plan for the future? Does he agree that an equivalent of the multi-fibre arrangement must be included in the GATT talks if we are to ensure the successful continuation of the industry?

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend is absolutely right and I can, indeed, give that assurance. Although the MFA will be phased out over a 10-year period, as the GATT round proceeds, there will be more than adequate safeguards for our own industry. That is absolutely essential, and there will be no weakening of our resolve on the matter.

Petroleum Engineering Department

16. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to relocate the petroleum engineering department from London to Aberdeen.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) a short time ago.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister accept that the fact that BP has decided to move its office from Glasgow to Aberdeen makes the case for the petroleum engineering department coming to Aberdeen even more compelling? Will he give the House a categorical assurance that his denigratory remarks in Aberdeen recently do not signify any intention to repudiate the Conservative party manifesto pledge to move the PED to Aberdeen?

Mr. Eggar: I made no denigratory remarks in Aberdeen. I merely drew attention—quite understandably—to the need for Aberdeen to control its costs as a centre. I believe that Aberdeen is the offshore oil centre of Europe. It has done spectacularly well over the past 20 years, and I want to see it doing even better. I want it to be a Europewide centre, not just a United Kingdom continental shelf centre. Aberdeen has some things to do

to take advantage of those opportunities. I made that quite clear because oil companies had expressed to me their concern about the cost side. I repeat the assurance that I gave to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) that I have an open mind with regard to relocation. I am awaiting the report from the independent consultants. I have given a pledge that that report will be published and, I will, of course, take account of what it says.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Can my hon. Friend assure the House that he will not only consider moving the centre of offshore petroleum exploration, from London to Aberdeen, but will examine the possibility of moving to the AEA Technology site at Winfrith in my constituency, next door to the centre for onshore petroleum exploration? A new technology park is to be established there and a great deal of research work is already being done into petroleum technology. I am sure that a move to the site would be warmly welcomed.

Mr. Eggar: I have listened very carefully to what my hon. Friend has said and I will look into the matter further.

Mr. Salmond: Can the Minister reconcile the enthusiasm with which the Government move thousands of civil servants to bail out the subsidy junkies in the London docklands with their reluctance to move 80 civil servants from opposite Buckingham palace to the centre of the oil industry in Aberdeen? What will happen to a party in Scotland that pledged before the election to move jobs to the north-east of Scotland if, after the election, it is seen to be conspiring to keep them in the south-east of England?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well what was in the Scottish Conservative manifesto. He also knows perfectly well what I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland have said. I suggest that he awaits the publication of the independent consultants' report and the decision that will be made taking account of that report and other matters.

Egypt

18. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on trade with Egypt.

Mr. Needham: Our commercial relations with Egypt are good. United Kingdom exports to Egypt have been just under £300 million annually. Imports have been just under £150 million.

Mr. Dalyell: With a major railway contract between the Egyptian border and Tobruk, with 1 million or more Egyptians working in Libya and 5,000 or more British nationals working in Libya, what are the Egyptians saying about the imposition of the increasingly farcical sanctions and what is the cost of those sanctions to Britain? When *Time* magazine and the Pan Am lawyers—not exactly organs of the left—are saying that the target is wrong in respect of the Libyans who were, at most, operatives, will not the Government reconsider the whole question of sanctions, because the responsibility may lie in Teheran?

Mr. Needham: I know the hon. Gentleman's views about sanctions on Libya, but I spent the past six and a half years seeing the consequences of Libyan Government actions through the Semtex, machine guns and rockets which have been blowing up the people of Northern Ireland and its economy—and so far as I am concerned personally, I should like the sanctions to be even harder against Libya.

Insolvency

19. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the workings of the Insolvency Act 1986.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Insolvency Act 1986 has a number of major aims: to provide remedies against abuse of limited liability by company officers; to regulate the activities of insolvency practitioners; to simplify formal insolvency procedures to allow official receivers to concentrate on protective and investigative work and to introduce new voluntary procedures allowing those in difficulties to come to an arrangement with creditors. I am broadly satisfied that the Act is achieving these objectives, but my officials in the Insolvency Service executive agency continue to monitor its workings.

Mr. Battle: I am grateful to the Minister for that reply, but does he accept that the Maxwell pensioners—and others, such as the Lewis's pensioners in Leeds—are trapped not only by faults in social security law, but by the inadequacies of the Insolvency Act 1986? Does he agree that the Government must amend that Act to ensure that occupational pensions are better protected and that they are not simply lost when a company goes under? If not, it would seem that the Maxwell episode is sadly proving to be the tip of a lost pensions iceberg.

Mr. Hamilton: As the hon. Gentleman will know, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security made a statement on Monday, an ingredient of which was that we should make provision under the Social Security Act 1990 to make deficits from pension funds that are wound-up a debt owed by the employer. The hon. Gentleman wants those debts to be made preferential. If that were done, it would be at the expense of other unsecured creditors of the company. It is not absolutely certain in welfare terms that that would be an improvement. However, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has announced a wide-ranging review of the law on pensions and that is one of the subjects that it would be appropriate to consider in connection with that review.

Artefacts of Torture

20. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to deter the trade in artefacts of torture.

Mr. Needham: The export of leg irons, shackles, gang chains and certain types of handcuff which may be misused against prisoners is already controlled by my Department. We pay great attention to the human rights records of other countries when deciding whether an export licence should be issued.

Mr. Bowis: Does my hon. Friend accept that, just as it is right and proper that our overseas aid policy is geared to acceptable human rights in the countries to which our aid is targeted, the same should apply to our trade? Does my hon. Friend accept also that there is no way in which

any British firm should export devices which are either designed to be or turn out to be used as barbaric forms of torture or barbaric types of imprisonment, including the leg irons to which he has referred?

Mr. Needham: Indeed, they should not. There is, of course, a difficulty whereby certain products which in normal use are perfectly safe can be misused and changed into measures of repression when they get to countries overseas. As I have said, my Department, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence keep a very close eye on this.

Mr. Alton: How does the Minister justify the sale of such equipment—not just leg irons, but entire cells which have been used for the execution of political prisoners in totalitarian regimes—in contrast with another decision by his Department to deny to the Croatian Government the use of mine detection equipment for the humanitarian purpose of clearing mines from areas where civilians are living?

Mr. Needham: I do not justify that, and I would not even attempt to do so. The point in my previous answer —I hope that the hon. Gentleman listened to me—is that much of the equipment is exported and the exporting company has no idea that the equipment may be altered and used for the purposes that the hon. Gentleman describes. In those circumstances, it is impossible for the Government to stop the export of all sorts of equipment which, for the vast majority of the time, are perfectly proper products.

Mr. Bellingham: I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend on his recent appointment. Is he aware that we are talking not only about artefacts of torture but about artefacts of execution? Is he aware that the Amnesty International report gives details of a set of gallows being exported from this country to a certain middle eastern country? Does he agree that that is totally unacceptable and must be stopped?

Mr. Needham: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his congratulations. As he knows, that was a single incident. Once the company had discovered it, it dealt with those involved. I agree that it is totally unacceptable to export gallows from this country.

Regional Policy

21. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his Department's plans for regional policy.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government remain committed to an effective, well-focused regional policy. I announced to the House yesterday a review of the United Kingdom assisted areas map.

Mr. Byers: Is the Minister aware that, since 1979, unemployment in the northern region has increased by 58 per cent. and that bankruptcies have increased by more than 200 per cent? Will he explain why, at a time of rising unemployment and record bankruptcies, the Government have cut regional assistance to industry in the north by 85 per cent. in real terms? When will the Government discharge their responsibilities to the people of the north by investing in the north so that it can bring real jobs to the people living there?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman will recall that I said in my answer that the Government remain committed to an effective, well-focused regional policy. The focus, of course, can be improved by reviewing the assisted area map to take into account changes in employment, employment opportunities, industry and other factors in the region since the map was last drawn in 1984. The hon. Gentleman refers to the overall volume of expenditure. He will recall that there was a grant called regional development grant—RDG—which was remarkably unfocused, as I believe is generally agreed. Much of what was spent went on paying companies to do things that they were going to do anyhow.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that his Department is uniquely placed to consider which regions of Britain are best placed to have more Government Departments relocated there from London? While the whole House and, indeed, the whole country looks forward to the demolition of Marsham street, can my right hon. Friend ensure that only those jobs which need to remain in London will remain here and that as many as possible will be relocated to the regions, especially Yorkshire?

Mr. Sainsbury: I cannot give a guarantee to my hon. Friend, who is a great supporter of Yorkshire, but I can assure him that it has long been the Government's policy to relocate as many Government jobs as appropriate. I am sure that what my hon. Friend has said about the attractions of Yorkshire will have been carefully listened to by the Departments and will be taken into account when they come to make decisions about how many of their employees can be relocated and where they might best be relocated.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that if regional policy is to be more effective in the future than it has been in recent years it needs not only a commitment of resources but an ability to fine tune so that assistance can be given in areas where there may be substantial closures of companies? Will he give an undertaking to the House both that the resources will be available and that flexibility will be built in to do a real job?

Mr. Sainsbury: I do not accept that regional policy has not been effective in the past, but I recognise the need for the policy to respond to changing circumstances. Indeed, that is why we are redrawing the map. Several of the instruments of regional policy, such as regional selective assistance, can take account of circumstances at any given moment in any given area.

Points of Order

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: One at a time.

3.30 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I rise briefly to raise two linked points of order. One is on hybridity and the other is on judicial cases before the courts. The second one, to which reference is made on page 378 of "Erskine May", is about whether there is a substantial risk that there will be prejudice to the trial of a case. There is authority for saying that legislation can overrule cases which bodies may bring before the courts, especially the civil courts. I should be grateful for guidance on how that might affect clause 52 of the Finance Bill.

The second point of order is about hybridity, to which reference is made on pages 519 to 521 of "Erskine May". Sir Robin Maxwell-Hyslop referred to it in the 1975-76 Session as reported in *Hansard*, in volume 912, column 299. "Erskine May" says:

"it is not easy to describe generally the ground on which such objections have been sustained or over-ruled."

My question to you, Madam Speaker, is whether there is a way, other than on the Floor of the House, in which clause 52 of the Finance Bill in so far as it refers to the building societies should be referred to the examiners. If that is a question on which you require notice, I can happily wait until tomorrow.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman should talk to the Public Bill Office about the matter. But I can tell him that the Bill to which he refers has been examined and it is not a hybrid Bill.

The sub judice rule does not apply to proceedings on Bills in Committee. What is in order on clause 52 of the Finance Bill is a matter for the Chairman of the Standing Committee to which it has been referred.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It will be within the recollection of the House that when he answered Question 18 the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) most unusually gave expression to a personal opinion as a Minister. I do not doubt that it was strongly felt——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has excellent parliamentary manners and has been here a long time. He should not try an extension of Question Time on me. He seeks a further explanation. That should not be addressed to the Chair. I have heard enough of that and I have answered the hon. Gentleman correctly.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will remember that yesterday the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson) raised a point of order on a matter which involved my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick). I gave the hon. Lady notice that I intended to raise the matter now. I seek your guidance. Before a packed House and on live television, the hon. Lady made allegations about my hon. Friend, suggesting that my hon. Friend had acted improperly. My hon. Friend wrote to the hon. Member for Hillsborough denying the allegations that she made in the House yesterday afternoon, and totally refuting the claim that my hon. Friend presented a petition at No. 10 Downing street.

Madam Speaker: Order. Is that a point of order for me?

Mr. Riddick: It is indeed. It is important that the record be put straight, and I want to ask you, Madam Speaker, how we can prevent such abuse of the procedures of the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have the perfect answer—right hon. and hon. Members can behave in a courteous and civilised way to one another.

Mr. Riddick *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I heard the hon. Gentleman's point of order, and it is on the record. I will not take any retrospective points of order. That matter is finished with.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I appeal to you as the defender of the rights of Back Benchers. In a letter of 19 April, I raised a certain matter with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and did so again in questions to him and to other Secretaries of State on 3 February, 18 February, 14 May, 18 May, 19 May, and 22 May. Answering the first question on the Order Paper today, the Minister for Trade claimed that he was ignorant of the matters in question, and contemptuously gave me his telephone number—suggesting that I had not carried out my job in raising the matter. Will you, Madam Speaker, instruct Ministers that when right hon. and hon. Members raise intelligent questions, they should receive serious answers?

Madam Speaker: Ministers are responsible for the answers that they give, and that matter is not for the Chair.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Is there another point of order. Yes—I thought as much. Mr. Skinner.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. At the end of the day, you, Madam Speaker, have something to do with questions to Ministers, because you decide whether or not they are in order. We could be placed in some difficulty in the near future because, according to some reports, at least two Cabinet Ministers—the Secretary of State for Social Security and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury—are holding secret meetings. May we know the precise moment that they get the sack so that we may table our questions to the correct Minister? We want to know who is to answer them. May we be informed?

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is always most capable of addressing his questions to the correct Minister.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. On much the same subject—[HON. MEMBERS: "It has been answered."] It is a totally new point of order.

Madam Speaker: Then I need to hear it very rapidly.

Mr. Enright: At the beginning of May, I tabled a written question to the President of the Board of Trade. By

19 May, the right hon. Gentleman replied that he would make an announcement shortly. Up to the present, no such announcement has been made. Is that not an abuse of the House?

Madam Speaker: I hardly think that matter is for the Chair. It is for Ministers to answer when questions are put to them.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTION FOR 26 JUNE

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Barry Field
Mr. Dennis Skinner
Lady Olga Maitland

BILLS PRESENTED

Local Government (Overseas Assistance)

Mr. Jim Lester, supported by Sir Michael Marshall, Mr. Peter Bottomley, Mr. David Knox, Mr. Colin Shepherd, Dr. Michael Clark, Dr. Keith Hampson, Mr. Tim Rathbone, Mr. Bowen Wells, Mr. John Bowis, Sir David Steel and Mr. Andrew Smith, presented a Bill to enable local authorities in Great Britain to provide advice and assistance as respects matters in which they have skill and experience to bodies engaged in local government outside the United Kingdom; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December 1992 and to be printed. [Bill 12.]

Osteopaths

Mr. Malcolm Moss, supported by Mr. David Atkinson, Mr. Sebastian Coe, Mr. Alan Duncan, Sir Anthony Durant, Mr. Frank Field, Dr. Liam Fox, Mr. Jerry Hayes, Ms. Liz Lynne, Mrs. Marion Roe, Mr. Peter Thurnham and Mr. John Townend, presented a Bill to establish a body to be known as the General Osteopathic Council; to provide for the regulation of the profession of osteopathy, including making provision as to the registration of osteopaths and as to their professional education and conduct; to make provision in connection with the development and promotion of the profession; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 January 1993 and to be printed. [Bill 13.]

Shops (Amendment)

Mr. Ray Powell, supported by Mr. Patrick Cormack, Mr. Donald Anderson, Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr, Michael Lord, Mr. Malcolm Thornton, Mrs. Ann Winterton, Mr. Stuart Bell, Mr. Alun Michael, Mr. Michael Alison, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody and Mr. A. J. Beith, presented a Bill to provide for a general prohibition on the opening on Sunday of shops for retail trade or business; to make provision for the registration with the local authority of certain specific categories of shops which are to be permitted to open on a Sunday; to make provision for certain exempt categories of shops which will be permitted to open on a Sunday without prior registration; to make provision for the payment of fees for registration; to provide for the protection of persons employed in or for the purpose of a shop which is to be permitted to open on a Sunday; to make consequential amendments to and repeals in the Shops Act 1950; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 22 January 1993 and to be printed. [Bill 14.]

Freedom and Responsibility of the Press

Mr. Mark Fisher, on behalf of Mr. Clive Soley, supported by Mr. Nick Raynsford, Mrs. Angela Eagle, Mr. Chris Smith, Ms. Harriet Harman, Mr. Bruce Grocott, Ms. Glenda Jackson, Mr. Charles Kennedy, Mr. Jeff Rooker, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett and Ms. Clare Short, presented a Bill to require newspapers to present news with due accuracy and impartiality; to secure the free dissemination of news and information in the public interest; to prescribe certain professional and ethical standards; to make provision with respect to enforcement, complaints and adjudication; and for connected purposes:

And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 29 January 1993 and to be printed. [Bill 15.]

Caravan sites (amendment)

Mr. Cranley Onslow presented a Bill to amend Part II of the Caravan Sites Act 1968; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 5 February 1993 and to be printed. [Bill 16.]

Representation of the people (amendment)

Mr. Harry Barnes, supported by Mr. Richard Shepherd, Mr. David Alton, Mrs. Margaret Ewing and Mr. Dafydd Wigley, presented a Bill to amend the law relating to the compilation and publication of electoral registers and the powers and duties of electoral registration officers; to require the publicising of certain matters; to require improved physical access to polling stations; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 12 February 1993 and to be printed. [Bill 17.]

Right to know

Mr. Mark Fisher, supported by Mr. Jeff Rooker, Ms. Clare Short, Mr. Chris Smith, Mr. Alistair Darling, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Mr. Seamus Mallon, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Clive Soley, Miss Emma Nicholson and Mr. Teddy Taylor, presented a Bill to establish a general right of access to official records for members of the public subject to certain exemptions; to provide for the correction of inaccurate official records; to provide for individuals to be notified of the availability of benefits in certain circumstances; to establish a right of access by individuals to their employment records subject to certain exemptions; to provide for the enforcement of these provisions; to amend the Companies Act 1985 with respect to the disclosure of certain information in the directors' report; to repeal the Official Secrets Act 1989 and replace it by new provisions; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 19 February 1993 and to be printed. [Bill 18.]

Road Traffic (Driving Instruction by Disabled Persons)

Sir John Hannam, supported by Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. Peter Thurnham, Ms. Liz Lynne, Mr. Gordon McMaster, Mr. Malcolm Thornton, Mr. Iain Mills and Mrs. Angela Browning, presented a Bill to make provision for enabling persons with certain physical disabilities to be authorised, in certain circumstances, to give paid instruction in the driving of motor cars; and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December 1992 and to be printed. [Bill 19.]

Medicines Information

Mr. Giles Radice, supported by Ms. Hilary Armstrong, Mr. Alistair Darling, Mr. Nick Raynsford, Mr. Chris Smith, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Jeff Rooker, Sir Richard Body, Mr. Jack Thompson and Ms. Tessa Jowell, presented a Bill to provide for the compilation and disclosure of information about medicinal products and related matters, subject to certain restrictions; to amend the Medicines Act 1968; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 January 1993 and to be printed. [Bill 20.]

Noise and Statutory Nuisance

Mr. Andrew Hunter, supported by Sir Nicholas Bonsor, Mr. Michael Brown, Mr. Terry Dicks, Mr. David Evenett, Mr. Roger Knapman, Mr. Michael Lord, Mr. Paul Marland, Mr. David Nicholson, Mr. J. F. Pawsey, Mr. Richard Shepherd and Mr. John Watts, presented a Bill to make provision for noise in a street to be a statutory nuisance; to make provision with respect to the operation of loudspeakers in a street; to make provision with respect to audible intruder alarms; to make provision for expenses incurred by local authorities in abating, or preventing the recurrence of, a statutory nuisance to be a charge on the premises to which they relate; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 22 January 1993 and to be printed. [Bill 21.]

Sexual Offences

Mr. Jerry Hayes, supported by Mr. Roger Sims, Mr. Gerald Bermingham, Mr. Stephen Day, Mr. Eric Pickles and Mr. John Bowis, presented a Bill to abolish the presumption of criminal law that a boy under the age of fourteen is incapable of sexual intercourse: And the same was read the first time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 29 January 1993 and to be printed. [Bill 22.]

Pensions

Mr. Bill Michie, supported by Ms. Dawn Primarolo, Mr. Jimmy Boyce, Mr. Kevin Hughes, Mr. Michael Clapham, Mr. Richard Caborn, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Ms. Helen Jackson, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Harry Barnes, Mrs. Audrey Wise and Mr. Dennis Skinner, presented a Bill to amend the law relating to occupational and personal pension schemes; to provide for the appointment of trustees by scheme members; to provide greater protection for the interests of scheme members; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 5 February 1993 and to be printed. [Bill 23.]

Employment Protection (Parental Leave)

Mr. Greville Janner, supported by Mrs. Margaret Beckett, Mrs. Anne Campbell, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, Mrs. Llin Golding, Ms. Harriet Harman, Mrs. Glenda Jackson, Ms. Tessa Jowell, Mrs. Jane Kennedy , Ms. Marjorie Mowlam, Mrs. Barbara Roche and Ms, Clare Short, presented a Bill to provide that parents shall have the right to a maximum of three months' leave in respect of the birth of their child or children; to permit that leave to be apportioned between those parents as they decide; to give similar rights to grandparents and other close relatives in certain circumstances; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 12 February 1993 and to printed. [Bill 24.]

Shops

Mr. James Couchman, supported by Mr. John Marshall, Mr. Alan Haselhurst, Mr. Simon Coombs, Mr. John Ward, Mr. Nick Harvey, Ms. Janet Anderson, Mr. Richard Alexander, Dr. Keith Hampson and Sir George Gardiner, presented a Bill to repeal the Shops Act 1950; to

make provision with regard to the opening hours of shops on Sundays; to make provision as to the rights of persons employed in or for the purposes of a shop which is open on Sundays; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 22 January 1993 and to be printed. [Bill 25.]

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Andrew Miller, supported by Mr. Nick Raynesford, Mr. Frank Field, Mrs. Jane Kennedy, Ms. Helen Jackson, Ms. Ann Coffey, Ms. Janet Anderson, Mr. Greg Pope, Mr. Tony Lloyd, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. Bryan Davies and Ms. Angela Eagle, presented a Bill to protect the interests of, and extend new rights to, members of occupational pension schemes in the event of changes in company ownership; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December 1992 and to be printed. [Bill 26.]

Licensed Premises (Exclusion of Certain Persons) (Amendment)

Mr. James Hill, supported by Sir Anthony Grant, Sir John Hunt, Sir Dudley Smith, Mr. David Young, Mrs. Angela Knight, Mr. Doug Hoyle, Mrs. Llin Golding, Mr. Ralph Howell, Mr. Bob Litherland and Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe, presented a Bill to amend the Licensed Premises (Exclusion of Certain Persons) Act 1980: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 January 1993 and to be printed. [Bill 27.]

Hedgerows

Mr. Peter Ainsworth, supported by Mr. Sebastian Coe, Mr. John Whittingdale, Mr. Alan Duncan, Mr. Harry Greenway, Mr. Eric Pickles, Mr. Nigel Waterson, Mr. John Ward, Mr. James Clappison, Mr. David Willetts and Mr. John Bowis, presented a Bill to make provision about hedgerows: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 22 January 1993 and to be printed. [Bill 28.]

Merchant Shipping (Registration etc.)

Mr. Richard Page, supported by Mr. David Harris, Mr. Patrick Thompson, Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock, Mr. Peter Atkinson and Mr. Michael Wood, presented a Bill to amend and restate the law relating to the registration of ships and related matters, to make provision in relation to ships on bareboat charter and to make amendments designed to facilitate, or otherwise desirable in connection with, the consolidation of the enactments relating to shipping and seamen: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 19 February 1993 and to be printed. [Bill 29.]

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Amendment)

Dr. Roger Berry, supported by Mr. Alfred Morris, Sir Richard Body, Mr. David Hinchliffe, Sir John Hannam and Mr. John Bowis, presented a Bill to amend the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1978 to require the provision of day and respite care to people with disabilities: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 5 February 1993 and to be printed. [Bill 30.]

Damages (Scotland)

Mr. Brian Wilson, supported by Mr. Tam Dalyell, presented a Bill to clarify and amend the law of Scotland concerning the right of certain relatives of a deceased person, and the right of executors, to claim damages in respect of the death of the deceased from personal injuries; to make provision regarding solatium where personal injuries result in loss of expectation of life; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 12 February 1993 and to be printed. [Bill 31.]

Ways and Means

Madam Speaker: Shall I put the motions together?

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I was proposing to speak on motion No. 5, unless the motions are taken together for the purposes of the debate.

Madam Speaker: I will therefore put the first four motions together.

DISTRIBUTIONS

Resolved,

That provision may be made as to whether any interest or other distribution paid after 14th May 1992 is a distribution for purposes of the Corporation Tax Acts.—*[Mr. Dorrell].*

DOUBLE TAXATION: INTEREST

Resolved,

That provision may be made about the construction of arrangements under section 788 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 as regards interest paid after 14th May 1992—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

FOREIGN EARNINGS

Resolved,

That provision may be made for the year 1992-93 and subsequent years of assessment in relation to foreign earnings. —*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

DEDUCTIONS ON ACCOUNT OF PAYMENTS

Resolved,

That provision may be made for the year 1992-93 and subsequent years of assessment in relation to deductions on account of annuities and other annual payments.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Companies carrying on life assurance business

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about companies carrying on life assurance business.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

3.43 pm

Mr. Beith: I suppose I am not surprised that the Government did not see fit to move Ways and Means Resolution No. 5 because it is another of their regular adventures into retrospection, of which the Finance Bill has a considerable quotient this year. The hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) raised a point of order at the end of Question Time and obliquely referred to another such matter. Ways and Means Resolution No. 5 states specifically

"That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made".

The Government are seeking to make retrospective provision for the taxation of life assurance companies. The Government's justification for that—it is one of their customary ones—is that, in doing so, they will cause the law to conform to what people thought it was. They will be able to pre-empt the outcome of the judicial proceedings in which some life assurance companies are engaged. The Revenue fears that it will lose the appeal and must therefore make some provision to fend off that possibility.

The House should not ever engage in retrospective legislation without the most careful assessment of whether it is desirable. These clauses were not in the Bill when it was first published but were added as a sudden afterthought. That is why there is a Ways and Means resolution about them.

If the taxpayers charter is to mean anything as part of the citizens charter apparatus, the right to challenge the Revenue's interpretation of the law must be a real right. Every time that a taxpayer, whether corporate or individual, succeeds in such a challenge, thereby casting doubt on whether the Revenue's interpretation can be sustained up to the highest courts in the land, why should Parliament leap in before the judicial process is complete to return the law to the position that the Revenue thought it was or wanted it to be? What does the Minister with responsibility for the public services think about the Inland Revenue's apparently insatiable appetite for retrospective legislation?

There is a great deal of uncertainty about the facts leading to the Ways and Means resolution. The Inland Revenue claims that the cost of not bringing it in might be £450 million in 1992-93 and a further £100 million in subsequent years. That figure is strongly disputed by the Association of British Insurers which is not aware of claims that would add up to that amount.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): How very surprising.

Mr. Beith: I note the hon. Gentleman's eager intervention. Traditionally no party has been more enthusiastic about retrospective legislation than Labour. That is why the hon. Gentleman is so keen to support the Government on this issue. The Opposition are ready to let the Government get away with it. They do not ask questions about it and I feel that they would prefer the questions not to be answered.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I support retrospective legislation when it is about working class people. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman was not here in 1974 when retrospective legislation was used in connection with Lord Winstanley, at that time the Member for Hazel Grove, who had taken an office of profit under the Crown. He was due to be expelled from Parliament for breaking the law. Retrospective legislation was used to save the neck of a Liberal Member of Parliament. Every Liberal Member supported that legislation.

Mr. Beith: What is more, it was debated at the time so that the House could consider whether there was a reasonable case for saying that Lord Winstanley held an office of profit under the Crown. The hon. Gentleman should know because he took part in the debate. We should not make retrospective provision without first considering whether the case is justified.

The hon. Gentleman speaks about life insurance as if the working classes have no interest in it, but they have an abiding interest. Many people hold insurance policies and depend upon pension funds for retirement, not least, of course, the funds that were administered by a former Labour Member of Parliament whom no Labour Member appears prepared to admit ever having met. Pensions and life insurances are bound up in financial institutions on which working people depend for their security in retirement. When considering whether a series of life insurance companies should pay millions in tax, we are considering whether those who pay the premiums to those companies should pay that tax through the premium. Let us allow no further currency for the notion that the

institutions that hold the savings of ordinary British people are somehow remote and of no interest. Their fate is bound up with that of those who put their money in pensions or life insurance.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): The hon. Gentleman spoke about policy holders. Does he suggest that they will suffer and be disadvantaged by the resolution?

Mr. Beith: Yes, that is precisely my argument. The costs of the companies concerned will rise and almost certainly policy holders' premiums will rise as a result. The argument is about the relative effect on policy holders and taxpayers in general.

The issue of principle is whether retrospection is justified. If the argument for retrospection is so strong, I wonder that it did not occur to the Government earlier. If in later stages in the consideration of the Finance Bill Ministers tell Opposition Members that their amendments would not have the desired effect or that they are incorrectly drafted, we shall receive that advice with wry amusement. There must have been a series of incorrect Inland Revenue draftings and repeals that led the law to be in a very different state from that which the Government imagined.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Beith: I shall give way for the last time before I invite the Minister to tell us a little more about the matter.

Mr. Cryer: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that when Conservative Members were in opposition and the Clay Cross issue arose they were opposed to retrospection? It seems, however, that they have shifted their ground. For example, during the general election, the Government tabled a statutory instrument—it came into force on 28 March—that gave tax concessions. It was a retrospective measure for Lloyd's underwriters that went back to 1988-89.

Mr. Beith: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing my attention to another example of retrospection. Every piece of retrospective legislation should be examined carefully, and that is why I took the view that the resolution should not go through on the nod.

3.51 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): As chairman of the all-party insurance and financial services group, of which the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) is one of the much valued vice-chairmen, I wish to take up a position that I suspect will be somewhere between the one that he has outlined and the stance that I suspect will be taken by my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary when he replies to this brief debate.

It would be wrong to give the impression that life assurance policyholders throughout Britain will suffer irrevocably if the resolution is approved by the House. I understand that only two—albeit very large—composite insurance companies are affected by the measure. The Government are attempting to put the law on all fours with their expectation of what it would be when the arrangements for the reform of the taxation of life assurance were approved by the House two or three years ago.

It seems that two principles are at stake, both of which concern some of us. I imagine that we shall want to listen carefully to my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary's reply, but however we choose to vote on the issue the two principles will rest heavily in our minds.

The first principle relates to a dispute between the two life assurance offices and the Treasury about the correct interpretation of the law. It might take several years for the matter to be fully resolved through the normal processes of legal challenge on taxation matters, for these processes can be drawn out. It must be right, therefore, to amend the law to incorporate what we intended three or four years ago when the new arrangements were introduced. The revenue that would be collected as a result of the arrangements that we thought we were making will not therefore be forgone.

My difficulty—I think that other hon. Members are in the same position—is in determining whether it is right for the change to apply retrospectively to matters that predated the Government's decision to change the law—in other words, retrospective legislation. One argument is that if we are to change the law, the change should have effect only from the date on which the Government signalled their intention to make it.

That brings me to my second difficulty and to the fulcrum of the argument. In responding to my first difficulty, I think that my hon. Friend the Minister will say that the Government signalled their intention to change the law in 1989 when we altered the arrangements for the taxation of life assurance companies. Nevertheless, we are again entering the difficult and highly emotive territory of retrospective legislation. Life assurance companies and the world of commerce generally would like to hear my hon. Friend define where the Government think that the line should be drawn: where retrospective taxation legislation is permitted, and where it is not?

We all understand that advice is given to taxpayers, whether they are ordinary members of the public, employees of firms or some of our largest corporations. That advice is always given in good faith on an interpretation of the tax laws which can be finalised only through the courts. That brings me back to my first point, which is to ask my hon. Friend to tell the House this afternoon why he thinks it is better for the House to decide that it knows best, whatever the courts may think of the claims of two companies against the Treasury, and to confirm that we should ensure that there is no prospect of the Exchequer losing any revenue as a result of the two challenges.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This is an insurance issue and a number of hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), are paid employees of insurance brokers or insurance organisations. Whatever their point of view, they should make that clear. The rules state categorically that if an hon. Member thinks that he has a financial interest, he should make it clear.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is correct. If there is any financial interest at all, I am sure that hon. Members will make it clear.

Mr. Greenway: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I prefaced my remarks by pointing out that I am chairman of the all-party insurance and financial services group, to which representations on this issue were made some three weeks ago at a meeting attended by some

[Mr. Greenway]

Opposition Members. I have no interest to declare in the matters that I have discussed this afternoon other than the interest that we all have, given our rights and responsibilities as Members of Parliament, to protect consumers and our constituents.

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. The hon. Member for Ryedale is parliamentary adviser to the Institute of Insurance Brokers, which would seem to bring him within the terms of the resolution passed by the House which states that a financial interest should be declared. There is a clear connection, and it is the advice of the Clerk of the House that where there is any doubt it is safest to declare an interest.

Madam Speaker: The Register of Members' Interests is one thing, but the declaration of an interest in the subject matter before us is another. I think that the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) is correct.

3.58 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has raised a serious point. Even if Parliament approves retrospective or retroactive legislation, it should not let it go through on the nod without explanation. There is clearly no problem if the House assents to retrospective legislation that gives people something, but there should be more care when such legislation takes something away.

We depend on the rule of law and the rule of Parliament and, as you said in your ruling on my point of order, Madam Speaker, it is within the power of the House to legislate to overrule private interests, whether of individuals or organisations, in matters that are before the courts. However, the Boulton edition of "Erskine May" says that that power should be used sparingly in criminal cases. In civil cases, the law is plain, and I am grateful to you, Madam Speaker, for spelling it out to the House. However, I hesitate to go as far as Sir Robin Maxwell-Hyslop would have done on the hybridity question.

The difficulty is that in an insurance-linked case, similar to that of the building societies' transitional arrangements for composite tax, those who work within the Revenue and the Treasury have to be far-sighted in assessing the law and proposing clauses in Finance Bills which, once enacted, with or without amendment, are watertight. The problem is that there are clever people outside the Revenue in commercial and insurance companies and building societies who look for gaps or overlaps in the law.

It is reasonable for Treasury Ministers to come back to the House of Commons and openly say that they believe that the law is in doubt or wrong and that they want Parliament to consider the matter and to make a change. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), I look forward to hearing my hon. Friend the Minister explain what is behind resolution No. 5.

The Minister's explanation will be based on information from the Inland Revenue, which itself is sometimes based on anticipation of what a court may decide—or on an attempt to interpret what a court has already decided, which is not always entirely clear. Problems arise when the consequences are not spelt out to the House. I hope that, in the case of life assurance companies and taxation, we will not be faced with a difference of view and perspective between the Inland Revenue and the Treasury on one side and affected corporate bodies such as insurance companies and building societies on the other.

The saga of clause 52 is not about to end. The problem there was that the Treasury was looking at the cash flow to Government and saying that there was a net cost to Government, while a number of building societies were saying that, because the end of the financial year coincided with the transitional arrangements, they were paying tax for a period in relation to which they had already satisfied the Revenue's demands.

I shall not go into detail, but I feel that my hon. Friend the Minister must try to explain whether it is fair and reasonable to establish certainty in regard to insurance company taxation. Perhaps he will also consider whether we are faced with the "sledgehammer and nut" problem that applies to clause 52. It may be necessary to protect £15,000 million that is at risk, but that need not mean eliminating the taxpayer's chance to establish a £57 million case, or a £100 million case. That represents less than 1 per cent. of the sum that the Opposition seem to think is perfectly reasonable. I might agree in relation to the £15,000 million level, but not in relation to the £57 million.

4.1 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): A point that is not in dispute is that, if any proposal for retrospective legislation comes to the House, every individual Member of Parliament should examine it carefully. The burden of proof on anyone who proposes such legislation is very heavy. I do not disagree with any of the hon. Members who have spoken about that. I also want the House to be clear about the precise nature of the debate, and the consequences of approving the resolution —if, indeed, the House approves it.

Mr. Cryer: The Minister is right to emphasise the importance of the issue of retrospective legislation. Can he assure me that, if a prayer is tabled against a statutory instrument that gives retrospective facilities to members of Lloyd's for 1988-89, he will treat the matter sympathetically and encourage the Government to provide time for a debate on the Floor of the House?

Mr. Dorrell: I shall certainly consider the hon. Gentleman's request. I would consider any case that he put to me in writing equally carefully.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I think it important to make a point about retrospective legislation in respect of Lloyd's. I stress that I have no interest to disclose.

Lloyd's legislation specifically recognises the existence of a different accounting basis. That is recognised in the Lloyd's Act——

Madam Speaker: Order. That is not at all relevant to our present debate.

Mr. Dorrell: Let me remind the House of the precise nature of the decision that it is now being asked to make. It is being asked not to approve a clause tabled for consideration in Committee but simply to provide a Ways and Means resolution so that the Committee can—within the rules of order—consider whether a retrospective clause should be written into the Finance Bill. I suggest that the proper time at which to consider the detail of the issue is on clause stand part, during the Committee stage.

Let me briefly sketch in the background to the clause, and explain why the Government are "leaping in"—to use the phrase employed by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). There are three salient points. First, there is the need for clarity. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) reminded the House, if the judicial process is to be carried to its conclusion—that could take several years, and substantial sums are at stake for the life assurance industry—clarity is a relevant consideration.

Secondly, there is the need to avoid capricious distribution of benefit—not, as the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed said, between policyholders in particular and taxpayers in general but between one group of policyholders of one life house and another group of policyholders of another life house. The House should be aware that the dispute underlying the resolution arises because, although ever since the legislation was put on the statute book in the first world war we have collected tax on investment returns of life houses that are making a trading loss, it is now being argued that the statutory basis on which that tax has been collected is wanting. This is not an example of new legislation not having the meaning that was originally intended. We have several decades of experience of having collected tax from life houses that have been in precisely the position of those who are now arguing that tax is not payable.

If that case were allowed to continue and no retrospective legislation were introduced, policyholders of houses that made a trading loss would receive an enormous tax windfall, which would not be available to policyholders of life houses that did not make a trading loss. Substantial sums would be distributed on an entirely capricious basis, which the House would not wish.

The third consideration is that, as the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed properly said, £450 million of revenue is at stake. Although that is not a decisive argument, it is relevant to whether, in this tax year, the House wants to see that amount of money made available on the capricious basis that I have described.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about companies carrying on life assurance business.

Orders of the Day

Finance Bill

(Clauses 19 and 20)

Considered in Committee.

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

Ordered,

That the order in which proceedings in Committee of the whole House on the Finance Bill are to be taken shall be Clause 20 and Clause 19.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): Before we consider clause 20, I note that three hon. Members wish to make their maiden speeches. I respectfully point out that, although it is entirely appropriate that they should refer to their constituencies and to former Members, they must address their more general remarks to the specific clauses and amendments.

Clause 20

SMALL COMPANIES

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

4.7 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): The purpose of the Bill is to set the small company rate of corporation tax for the year 1992-93. As the House will be aware, clause 20 puts into effect the announcement that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor made in his Budget statement: that for the current financial year the small company rate should continue at the same rate as it has been for a number of years—25 per cent. on the first £250,000 of taxable profit, and a marginal rate of 35 per cent. for profits between £250,000 and £1,250,000. The average rate on profits of more than £1¼ million is 33 per cent.

The clause continues the policy that the Government have espoused since 1983 of aligning the standard rate of income tax with the small company rate of corporation tax. We believe that the policy achieves fairness between small companies, personal traders and partnerships. It reflects our belief that the small business sector should be encouraged because great economic benefits, both short and long term, flow from it.

The House might be interested to know that, among the companies which pay corporation tax, 300,000 out of a total of 380,000 now fall within the 25 per cent. band—in other words, they make profits of less than £250,000. It is a rate from which a large number of small businesses benefit and it reflects our continuing emphasis on the importance of ensuring a low marginal rate of tax on wealth creation in order to provide a proper incentive and reward for the wealth-creation process. The small companies' rate of tax is one of the clearest examples of the progress that the Government have been able to make since 1979 in the desire for a reduction in the marginal rate of tax and the encouragement of the wealth-creation process.

In 1979, the small companies' rate of corporation tax stood at 42 per cent. We have now reduced it to 25 per

[Mr. Stephen Dorrell]

cent. Furthermore, in 1979 the limit above which the tax rate started to rise was profits of £70,000. If one made profits of more than £70,000 in 1979, one no longer benefited from the full small companies' rate but was moving towards the full main corporation tax rate of 52 per cent. The £70,000 limit has risen to the current level of £250,000 and the small companies' corporation tax rate has fallen from 42 per cent. to 25 per cent.

The clear result, of which the House should take due cognisance, is a more vibrant and vigorous small business sector. The effect has been to create more new businesses and jobs and a small business sector which is a more vibrant part of the economy than it was 15 years ago. Since 1979, 400,000 more businesses have been created and become active. There are now, on average, 610 more businesses in every constituency than in 1979. I strongly believe that that is the result of the more benign environment created by the Government.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Before the Financial Secretary gets carried away by the compelling effect of the small companies' rate of corporation tax, which I support, I hope that he will recognise that only 335,000 companies pay corporation tax compared with 1·7 million which pay value added tax. Therefore, although the clause is important, it will benefit only a minority in the small business sector.

Mr. Dorrell: I recognise that it is a minority of the total, but the small companies' rate of corporation tax is an important part of the total package of tax and other incentives available to the small business sector. What we did during the 1980s, and on which we must build in the 1990s, is to ensure that our tax and regulatory regime properly considers the interests of the small business sector because it is from that sector that the big and successful businesses of the future grow.

Clause 20 is an important part of our total commitment to improving incentives and rewards within the small business sector, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): As this is the first opportunity that I have had, I begin by welcoming you, Mr. Morris, to your post. Three Members of the House are former councillors of the London borough of Islington—you and I happen to be two of them. Two Members of the House happen to be former chairmen of housing in the London borough of Islington—again, you and I are those two hon. Members. It therefore gives me particular pleasure to welcome you to the high office that you now hold.

As the Financial Secretary outlined, clause 20 sets the small companies' rate of corporation tax at the same level as last year. We have no quarrel with the clause, although the picture that the Financial Secretary painted of the average number of additional businesses which have mushroomed in all our constituencies must be set beside the additional number of business liquidations which have also mushroomed in our constituencies. The additional number of unemployed people has become all too evident in our constituencies in the past two years.

4.15 pm

Mr. Dorrell: For the sake of clarity, I should explain that the figure that I gave is net of closures. It refers to new businesses operating today, compared with the number operating in each constituency in 1979.

Mr. Smith: I appreciate that point, which is frequently made by Ministers, but they fail to understand that the number of people without jobs and claiming benefit has risen inexorably over the past two years, and Government policies are doing nothing to assist that problem.

The Financial Secretary spoke warmly about the fact that the Government have aligned the small companies' rate of corporation tax with the standard rate of income tax. What do they intend to do about the new 20 per cent. band of income tax? It appears to be their intention, difficult though it will be to achieve, to expand the 20 per cent. band until it caters for a larger number of people than the standard rate band. What will they then do about the small companies' rate of corporation tax? It would be interesting to hear their forward thoughts on that.

Although we have no quarrel with the 20 per cent. figure in the clause, we must place it on record that the Government should be taking many other steps to assist small businesses. I will mention just two for starters. First, there should be a root-and-branch reform of the uniform business rate. The suspending measure that the Chancellor announced in the Budget was helpful, but it went nowhere near far enough to alleviate the difficulty that the uniform business rate is causing to small businesses. Secondly, there must be more effective measures than the paltry steps announced in the Budget to tackle the problem of late payment of bills, especially by large companies to small companies. For instance, the Bill does not provide for a proper system of interest payments on outstanding bills.

We shall wish to return to those issues in the course of our discussion on the Bill. In the meantime, however, we are happy to see clause 20 make reasonably swift progress to the statute book.

Mrs. Judith Chaplin (Newbury): I shall speak on clause 20 in a moment, but I should like first to go a little wider.

It is traditional in a maiden speech to praise one's predecessor, and I have listened with interest as my fellow new Members have praised—or even damned with faint praise—their predecessors, but no hon. Member who sat in the last Parliament would not join me in my admiration for the previous hon. Member for Newbury. Sir Michael McNair-Wilson had the unenviable distinction of being the first Member of this House to suffer kidney failure, undergo dialysis and, eventually, have a kidney transplant. Hon. Members will recognise how well he continued to perform his parliamentary duties, with enormous courage. I know from many examples how diligently he continued to serve his constituency, and many kidney patients know how well he turned his experiences of illness to bring them benefits and much better facilities. I know that Sir Michael would agree with me that he could not have done that without the support of his wife, so I am sure that all hon. Members will join me in wishing him continued improved health, and them both a long and happy retirement.

The Newbury constituency takes its name from the largest town within it. It is a large constituency which stretches across the whole of west Berkshire—a beautiful area with many diverse activities. One of its most important industries is racing. Indeed, the highlight of the

election campaign and of "party politics" there was unrelated to any candidate—when the horse of that name romped home in the Grand National to the extreme benefit of many of my betting constituents.

The racing industry is important. It employs enormous numbers of people not only in the stables but on the courses and in the betting shops. I welcome the announcement in the Budget that betting duty is to be cut so that £15 million can be redirected to helping this important industry. Nevertheless, the industry continues to face a substantial problem in that the value added tax at 17·5 per cent. levied on the sale of racehorses here is much higher than in France or Ireland and there may well be a real danger of auctioneers, breeders and perhaps even trainers going overseas. In the past, one of the arguments that the Government have deployed against tax harmonisation was that it removed their ability to reduce taxes in a competitive situation. This is exactly such a case. I hope that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will consider how to restore our competitiveness in this area.

Another important industry is the defence industry. The very names Aldermaston and Greenham common are synonymous with the protests of the past. Few now doubt that the protesters were wrong, that it was a strong defence policy which continued to bring the former Soviet Union back to the negotiating table, and that it was the siting of cruise missiles at Greenham common which eventually led to the intermediate nuclear forces treaty and the abolition of a whole class of nuclear weapons. Now, the people of Newbury hope that it will not be long before Greenham common is common land once again and open to them all.

Perhaps what the Newbury constituency most exemplifies is the economic development of the 1980s. It stretches along the M4—the golden corridor—and has many young high-tech companies competitive with the best in the world. Many started as small businesses, with their founders putting capital and security at risk, and many have suffered hard in the current recession. It is important that the Government should do all that they can to restore confidence there and to help those companies begin to expand again.

I know that we have the lowest corporation tax in Europe, but other countries are bringing their rates down and we should stay ahead. As the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) said, it is to be hoped that we shall repeat that process and look to reduce company taxation in the same way as we have committed ourselves to reducing personal income tax.

The amount of corporation tax is a function of the profitability of a company, and estimates of future profitability affect companies' capital values. Businesses and farmers in my constituency welcome the proposed increase in inheritance tax relief on business assets to 100 per cent. Too often in the past firms have been damaged or even broken up in order to find liquid funds to pay the tax following an unexpected death—and death seldom comes at a convenient time for companies. That problem will now no longer occur.

That welcome change, however, could lead to an unwelcome consequence. Currently, if such assets are handed over during the donor's lifetime, capital gains tax is rolled over but not eliminated. The Finance Bill proposal may lead owners to hang on to their possessions until death to avoid capital gains tax on the increase in value of the assets, rather than handing them over at the best time for the development of that company. And who can blame them? The vast majority of capital gains tax is paid each year by a relatively small number of people selling out of firms that they have built up at considerable risk and sacrifice to themselves. They resent paying the Government nearly half the increase in the value of their companies.

In the past few years, we have seen the risks to which such companies expose themselves. Those small companies, which are started up with very little capital, are the life blood of the economy. I hope that the Chancellor will reconsider the impact of this complex and distorting tax in terms of discouraging risk-taking in this country.

Previous Conservative Chancellors have been proud to abolish a tax each year. The present Chancellor has continued that admirable tradition with the proposed abolition of the matches and mechanical lighters duty in this year's Finance Bill, but there are many other, more important taxes that I could suggest as candidates for abolition. I hope that the Government will continue to be both a tax-reforming Government and a tax-cutting Government.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I congratulate the hon. Member for Newbury (Mrs. Chaplin) on a cogent and well-delivered maiden speech. Her enthusiasm for Finance Bill Committee work will already have been noted by the Whips, and she has shown herself well suited to such work. If she does not want to serve on the Standing Committee, she would be well advised to say quite soon that she does not agree with the building society provisions and proposes to vote against them in Committee. I fear that that is her only hope of escaping service on the Committee now that she has shown herself so well prepared for it.

We all appreciated the hon. Lady's tribute to her predecessor, who was held in very high regard in this place and whose health and recovery were a matter of great concern to hon. Members. There grew up around the Christian fellowship in the House much prayer and support for Michael McNair-Wilson and his wife during that time, through which they both came with marvellous courage. Many in the House will remember that experience and it will be one of the ways in which they remember Michael affectionately, too.

The clause relating to corporation tax and small business has to be seen in its proper perspective, which is that a large number of small businesses do not pay any corporation tax because they are not making enough money to do so. Many of them are victims of the recession and are hanging on desperately, and although they may be worried about a number of matters—about the uniform business rate and the impact that it had on them until this year's changes, about the VAT inspector and the burdens that he places upon them and about sorting out their employees' pay-as-you-earn—corporation tax is certainly not top of their anxiety list.

One of the striking things about the tax is that most of it is paid by a relatively few companies. Some 3,500 firms —1 per cent. of the total paying corporation tax—paid 70 per cent. of the total yield of the tax, and seven firms paid 10 per cent. of that yield. Looked at another way, that means that 99 per cent. of firms paying corporation tax contribute only 30 per cent. of the yield. It follows that the administrative costs of collecting corporation tax from small businesses are relatively high, and those costs fall not just on the Government but on business. That is an

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

argument for trying to keep small business out of the corporation tax net to a large extent, not by making it less profitable but by ensuring that the allowances and tax rates are conducive to the achievement of that end.

That is quite difficult. We cannot use the same allowance system as for personal taxation because if we did companies would simply subdivide themselves to maximise benefit from allowances. Although it is desirable to minimise the impact of corporation tax, we probably need to look to other instruments of small business taxation to give the help that the Minister seems to feel could be offered under the corporation tax provision.

The Minister cited the corporation tax rate as an example of the climate in which business operates. I understand his point, but other things will probably matter more to small businesses, one of which is obviously the uniform business rate. I welcome the changes to the uniform business rate, although we argued for going a little further than the Government. After his experiences in Bath, Mr. Chris Patten may, on reflection, be able to offer a little support for the change. The Bath experience is a good example of how the uniform business rate has hit large numbers of small businesses very hard in many parts of the country.

The tax burden on small business could be reduced in other ways and by a greater amount than through the proposals in clause 20. For example, if national insurance and income tax were integrated as systems, that would reduce the enormous administrative burden on business of running the two systems. The national insurance system imposes a kind of poll tax on business in the form of class 2 national insurance contributions which are a disincentive for the smallest businesses.

There are many opportunities for reforming the tax system to help the small business sector. Many of those opportunities lie in the administration of taxes that affect all small businesses. When judging whether the climate of taxation is as helpful to small businesses as it could be, I hope that Treasury Ministers will look far beyond corporation tax, welcome though that provision is.

4.30 pm

Mr. Dorrell: I welcome the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mrs. Chaplin). Hon. Members on both sides of the House will have welcomed what she said about Michael McNair-Wilson. She was entirely right to stress his courage, which was displayed on many ocasions in the Chamber, and his effective advocacy of his constituents' interests. As a former Health Minister responsible for the transplant programme, I had good reason to know what an effective advocate he was of the interests of kidney patients. I endorse everything that my hon. Friend the new Member for Newbury said about the effectivenesss, courage and personal niceness of Michael McNair-Wilson.

I have a particular link with Michael McNair-Wilson because he was my immediate predecessor as Parliamentary Private Secretary to Peter Walker.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): And look where that got him.

Mr. Dorrell: Indeed, look where that got everyone. Michael McNair-Wilson showed me the ropes and taught me how to be a PPS from behind.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury stressed the importance of the racing industry, which is of great interest to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I have noted her point about the need to ensure that the VAT charge paid by the racing industry is measured against a test of competitiveness, as well as a test of fairness, against other industries operating in this country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury also reminded us, as I tried to do earlier, that the tax regime on small companies plays a vital role in the development of an effective free enterprise economy. She reminded us of the old aphorism that great oaks from little acorns grow and that, if we do not have fertile ground for the development of small business, we will not have the new businesses that become big businesses, such as those that now operate in her constituency and employ her constituents.

The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury about inheritance tax and the link with capital gains tax is well taken. If one wants to build a large company from a small business start, the year-by-year profit tax regime must be congenial to the growth of the small business and the tax system, as a whole, must also be congenial to the growth of small business.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) stressed that small company corporation tax is not the only part of the system that we must ensure is congenial to small business. I agree with that. A wide range of tax and other regulatory activities impinge on the activities of small business. We must ensure that all of them are as favourable as possible so that the ground is fertile for the growth of small business.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) asked about the link between small company corporation tax and the standard rate of income tax. As we develop our marginal rate policy at the bottom of the income tax scale, we will obviously need to review year by year how that impacts on small company corporation tax. But we have made it clear that it is our intention to reduce the standard rate of tax to 20 per cent. By implication and extension, we could therefore, on the basis of our record, assume that we would expect and hope to be able to do the same for small company corporation tax as well.

The hon. Gentleman argued for root-and-branch reform of the uniform business rate. It is not unfair to say that he did not sketch in enormous detail what he had in mind. It is difficult to react to proposals for root-and-branch reform without a slightly greater idea of it, fleshing out the grant strategy that he obviously has in his hidden agenda, but we shall seek to winkle it out to establish precisely what he has in mind.

The importance of ensuring that effective action is taken to encourage prompt payment and to discourage late payment of bills was addressed by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his Budget speech. We are addressing the matter through the Government's own contracts by ensuring that, when the Government sign a prime contract, we use that contractual mechanism to ensure that not only our own prime contractors but subcontractors pay their suppliers on time.

We are addressing the matter also, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced in the Budget, through

a review of small claims recovery procedures to ensure that they are as effective, cheap, efficient and, perhaps most important, timely as possible.

The hon. Gentleman is on to a good point. We agree with him and we are taking action to ensure that words are turned into action.

Mr. Kenneth Purchase (Wolverhampton, North-East): What instruction has been given to health authorities in regard to the average number of days for payment of debt? When I served on a health authority, there was an implicit instruction to increase from 32 to 35 days the average time for discharging bills.

Mr. Dorrell: The policy of the national health service is very clear and has been laid out time and again in guidance to health authorities: health authorities should pay bills on time and should organise their affairs so that they have the resources to do that. Indeed, the Government backed up that policy with action during the previous public expenditure survey, when we provided £80 million to the national health service specifically to reduce the amounts outstanding by health authorities beyond the due date. We have not only made the guidance clear but provided real money to put health authorities in a position in which they can carry out that guidance. I commend the clause to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 20 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 19

CHARGE AND RATE OF CORPORATION TAX FOR 1992

Mr. Chris Smith: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 12, line 46, at beginning insert '(1)'.

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 4, in page 12, line 47, at end add—

'(2) Where a company whose activities consist—

(i) wholly or mainly in the manufacture of finished goods, partly finished goods or materials, and

Mr. Smith: The purpose of the amendments is to provide enhanced first year capital allowances for investment in plant and machinery by manufacturing industry. The debate takes place against a background of continued manufacturing decline in this country. For 13 years, our manufacturing sector has been neglected by a Government obsessed with the purported virtues of market forces and blind to the needs of a crucial part of our national economy. The devastation began in 1980 and 1981, when we lost a quarter of our manufacturing capacity, but the recession that we are still living through has compounded the problem.

As a country which once prided itself on being the workshop of the world, since 1979 we have seen our manufacturing performance slip to the bottom of the international league. We have performed worst out of all the OECD countries on manufacturing performance in recent years. From 1974 to 1978, manufacturing accounted for nearly 30 per cent. of our GDP. Last year, it was less than 22 per cent. Manufacturing is not the be-all and end-all of our economy, of course—the service sector remains every bit as important—but we ignore and neglect manufacturing at our peril. It is, and will always be, the principal internationally traded part of our economy. We make and sell goods or we falter. The choice is entirely clear. It is just a pity that that cannot be recognised so readily on the Conservative Benches.

In 1983, for the first time since the industrial revolution, Britain imported more manufactured goods than we exported. Ever since that day, throughout the windfall of North sea oil, throughout—indeed, perhaps because of—the Lawson boom, and throughout the subsequent impact of recession, we have continued to be in deficit. That is the manufacturing background against which the debate takes place. That is the legacy of the Government's time hitherto in office.

If manufacturing output has performed poorly—we should remember that even the Government admit that it fell by 5·25 per cent. in 1991—the picture in manufacturing investment is even bleaker. In the past year, manufacturing investment fell by 11 per cent. At constant prices, there is less investment now than there was in 1979. What is worse, in every one of the eight years following 1979 there was less investment than there had been in 1979.

While competitor economies, especially in Europe and Japan, were increasing their investment performance, we reduced ours. That is no way to prepare our economy for the challenges of the single market. In the past two years, the picture has been similar. Only last week, the European Commission published comparative figures on investment performances in the various countries of the European Community. In terms of investment in equipment and looking at volume rather than merely value, they show a minus figure for investment in the United Kingdom in 1990—a decline of 3·8 per cent. The European average was a plus figure of 4·8 per cent.

In 1991, the picture was worse. There was a decline in the United Kingdom of 11·8 per cent. but a decline in the European average, which is sharply affected by the United Kingdom figure, of 0·5 per cent. The prediction for 1992 is a fall in the United Kingdom of 4 per cent. and a rise in the European average of 0·2 per cent. Those figures show clearly that, consistently in the past two years and into this year, we are performing substantially worse in manufacturing investment and equipment than the average—let alone the best—performers among our European partner countries. We were told by the Government in the Red Book published at the time of the Budget that the prospects for the rest of the year were for a further fall of 0·5 per cent. in overall investment.

Of course, we must note the Government's tendency to juggle with definitions of investment. At one moment, they will talk about overall investment in the economy, at the next moment they will talk about business investment, and at other times they will talk about manufacturing investment. As always, the Government carefully select their definitions to put the best possible gloss on their failures. However, even if we take the Government's favoured measure—overall investment—their prediction of a further decline of 0·5 per cent. this year is open to question. Let us consider the evidence. The Central Statistical Office published figures last Thursday predicting a 2 per cent. fall in the investment of British firms surveyed. There is no 0·5 per cent. there—a fall of 2 per cent. is predicted.

The first quarter survey by the Association of British Chambers of Commerce showed a 3 per cent. negative figure for intentions to invest in manufacturing plant and machinery—down from the 2 per cent. negative figure in the fourth quarter survey last year. The independent

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averages compiled by the Treasury show a similar picture. The average of non-City, academic and institutional forecasts for the coming year shows an average decline of 1·5 per cent. in gross fixed investment. Only one out of the 12 institutions agrees with the Government that the fall is likely to be 0·5 per cent.

4.45 pm

According to 16 City firms surveyed in gathering independent forecasts, the picture there is even worse: they expect a decline of 2·3 per cent. in gross fixed investment. Out of 16, only two agree with the Government that the decline will be 0·5 per cent. or less.

What of the Government's position? We read with interest in *The Daily Telegraph* yesterday—not the source least likely to be favourable to the Government—a report which said:

"The Treasury is to scrap its one per cent. growth forecast for 1992-93, following a poor first quarter and the absence of any evidence of any recovery since then . . . the Treasury team has cut its growth forecast to under ½ per cent."

If the growth forecast is being revised downwards, that obviously has immediate implications for output, unemployment, public sector finances, the public expenditure round and, most probably, investment levels.

We ought to be told in the clear light of day whether *The Daily Telegraph* report is correct. Have Treasury growth expectations been more than halved? What impact will that have and is it expected to have? I hope that the Financial Secretary will have the courage and decency to tell us when he replies to the debate.

Whichever way we look at it, the picture of manufacturing investment is far from healthy. It has fallen sharply in the past two years and is still falling. Our amendment seeks to reverse that decline. Investment is a crucial preparatory economic activity. If investment lags behind recovery and demand—worse still, if it does not respond to or predict a recovery in demand—the supply of goods will not be there, our dependence on imports will increase, and the imbalance between supply and demand will become even more severe.

Investment in manufacturing industry is vital now if we are to achieve anything like a sustainable recovery in the years to come. Enhanced capital allowances such as those proposed in our amendment would help enormously in stimulating investment. Our amendment is carefully targeted. It is aimed at manufacturing industry in particular, and specifically at plant and machinery. It raises the first year allowance, for a period of one year only, from 25 per cent. to 40 per cent. It would provide a direct incentive to firms to bring forward investment decisions that might otherwise be postponed—sometimes indefinitely.

We know from the experience of 1984 to 1986 that capital allowances work. They are not perfect—no fiscal stimulus ever is—but they can help. That is why the Confederation of British Industry, the Engineering Employers Federation, and the Trades Union Congress called for enhanced allowances, and why business men throughout the country endorse precisely the proposal contained in our amendment.

Tom O'Connor, chairman of the CBI's Small Firms Council, said last September:

"An increase in the rate of depreciation allowance for plant and machinery from the current 25 per cent. would provide a powerful and direct stimulus to small companies' investment. The economy would benefit: as growth increases so will revenues from business, in the form of corporation tax."

The only person who does not seem to agree with the need for enhanced allowances as a one-off stimulus for investment activity is the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He and his colleagues have consistently ruled out the case for capital allowances. They accuse us of dirigiste tendencies in advocating them, but that is total nonsense. Perhaps the Chancellor ought to consider the words of the President of the Board of Trade who in 1987, in an earlier incarnation, wrote an extremely interesting book, "Where There's a Will". It praises, in particular, the Japanese approach to the relationship between Government and industry. The right hon. Gentleman wrote that the Japanese

"have done the very thing which we pretend no government can do: they have targeted the world marketplace and, with a combination of domestic competition and taxpayer support, they have come to capture an increasingly large share of it. Do we really think our companies can win without the backing of our government when the consumer appetite in Britain is so eagerly fed by imports from a country whose economic and industrial effort is so single-mindedly directed?"

That puts the case in a nutshell.

This country needs Government support of manufacturing industry in particular—especially in the form of fiscal stimulus of the kind that our amendment proposes. That cannot completely ensure effective and sustained recovery, but it would be a key part of the required package.

The Government's record on manufacturing investment is appalling. In real terms, the level is now lower than when the Tories took office in 1979. Britain is the only country in the Community to have suffered in that way. Worse still, the value of investment in our manufacturing industry is still falling. In the past year, it fell by a staggering 11 per cent., and Government figures published last week show that the decline is continuing.

Investment in plant and machinery is the seed corn of future wealth creation. Unless we invest now, we shall not produce goods, provide jobs, make sales, and achieve growth in the years ahead. That is especially true of manufacturing industry—yet the Tories have neglected and denigrated its importance for far too long. With our balance of payments deficit already starting to rise again, nothing is more crucial than providing a boost to manufacturing investment. Our amendment would achieve precisely that, and I commend it to the Committee.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): In one of the numerous speeches that have been made in the House on the Maastricht treaty in recent months, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) reminded us that the German economic miracle was not created by the Bundesbank but was the consequence of innovative industrial investment by German companies—and that, for all the changes that might occur in economic and monetary union and among the central banks, the ultimate test of an economy is whether it invests in manufacturing the products that consumers want.

I have had the privilege of representing for more than 20 years a community that began the industrial revolution. It had iron and steel works in the 18th century, and holds to the traditional belief that manufacturing is a good thing. This country seems to have lost its appetite for making

things, and now believes that there are other ways of sustaining the economies of communities such as mine. That has proved to be an illusion.

The Financial Secretary spoke of his pupillage under Mr. Peter Walker. We all had our pupillage under him. When he was Secretary of State for Wales, he was our new economic whiz kid for the best part of two years. He used to travel around boasting that the Principality supported more jobs in banking than in mining. I never understood the point he was making. Perhaps he was suggesting that it was a good thing that there were fewer jobs in mining, or that at least there were alternative jobs in banking. We did not understand why they could not be complementary. Why should it be thought that miners were competing for jobs with bankers? Nevertheless, that is the basis on which, for the past two or three years, we were sold an alternative economy.

It was suggested that the service sector would be our exciting new saviour, but in the past year or two we have started to see insecurity in the very sector that was supposed to provide our salvation. The recent threat of a takeover by Lloyds of the Midland created a wave of insecurity, and taught us how wrong it is to attempt to rebuild the economy of a community such as mine on the service sector.

It would be all right if that sector had brought to our communities the sophisticated information technology that characterises today's new-style, high-class financial services, but it has not done so. Instead, we have seen only a spate of DIY retailers—large sheds selling DIY goods of one kind or another. They are heavily dependent on the community's purchasing power, so other jobs must exist to create it if those new retail activities are to survive. However, cuts are occurring even in that sector in communities such as mine.

The only modern inward investment in my community has come from the Japanese, who were attracted by successive Governments. The first to establish itself in my constituency did so under a Labour Government in the 1970s. The most recent new project was announced 12 months ago.

Inward investors require two things. First, they are looking for a work force trained in manufacturing. The real victims of the recession and the collapse of manufacturing investment in my community, apart from companies, have been the manufacturing training programmes and manufacturing training opportunities.

5 pm

Great public corporations, such as the British Steel Corporation and Hoover, offered great training opportunities to young people in my constituency, but, in the past decade, they have closed down their manufacturing training schools. National vocational qualifications and training and enterprise councils have not replaced the training infrastructure, which was an intrinsic part of the manufacturing communities that I represent.

Sadly, in communities like mine, we are training to obtain yesteryear's skills on yesteryear's machines. That is the real tragedy. Inward investors ask, "Where are the modern skills and a trained work force? Where are the work force who understand the concept of total quality management and understand a modern production line rather than the old-fashioned ones?" Because of the lack of manufacturing investment, people in my area are being trained on machines, and therefore for skills, that are already out of date. The problem is not only a lack of manufacturing investment, but the fact that that lack has led to the sacrifice of the training skills in our communities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) has raised an important fundamental principle that is essential to the redevelopment of the economy in areas such as mine. As a result of inward investment, we desperately hope that the development of component making and the provision of services to new manufacturers will play a part in our manufacturing salvation. There have been some exciting success stories, such as Nissan in the north-east and Sony in Bridgend, where the resourcing of components has begun to create alternative manufacturing job opportunities in smaller companies.

I have been involved in prompting, cajoling, pleading with and begging the Welsh Development Agency and a succession of Secretaries of State to take the supply development initiative seriousiy. It would enable local companies to service, feed and deliver components to the occasional new company that we manage to attract to our areas. That is the way to increase the number of manufacturing jobs in our society. In the present climate, in which companies face cripplingly high interest rates, a lack of liquidity and the absence of proper manufacturing incentives, manufacturing supply development initiatives are simply dreams rather than practical propositions.

The desperate need to create a new manufacturing training programme and the opportunity to develop supply development initiatives are dependent on a new spirit, attitude and set of incentives designed to assist manufacturing in communities such as mine.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I apologise to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) because I was not present at the start of his speech. However, I listened carefully to the remainder of what he said.

Although the hon. Gentleman's amendments are well intentioned, they are misguided. They are well intentioned because everyone wants a strong manufacturing base and increased manufacturing investment in the United Kingdom. The question is whether it makes sense in tax terms to discriminate positively in favour of manufacturing and, by definition, against other forms of investment.

Labour Members have consistently had difficulty in coming to terms with the fact that, in an expanding economy, manufacturing, by definition, tends to constitute a smaller and smaller proportion of national output. In Britain, it constitutes about 25 per cent. of output, but in other economies it accounts for a much smaller proportion. That is a sign not of failure but of success. It is a sign of overall growth, because there is a finite limit to the demand for manufactured goods by consumers. Consumers with large disposable incomes have a greater propensity to spend on increased services, such as leisure, tourism, sport and other service products.

Labour Members also find it difficult to appreciate that manufacturing businesses have tended to concentrate more and more on their core activities. For example, they may have carried out one particular function that was important but ancillary to the core business, in-house, but today they tend to contract out that service.

The successful American company, Mars, which is based in Slough, ran a large transport business, which was an integral part of its manufacturing business. A few years

[Mr. Tim Smith]

ago, it sold the transport business, through a management buy-out, to the people who ran it. Therefore, that is now a separate business and, for the purposes of the standard industrial classification, is now categorised as a service rather than as a manufacturing business. Nothing had actually changed, but Mars, like many other companies, had decided to concentrate on its core manufacturing activity and to contract out the important support services.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said that capital allowances work, and he cited the period from 1984 to 1986 to support his proposition. However, that proposition depends on what one means by capital allowances and what one means by work. The hon. Gentleman picked a strange period, because it came immediately after the Lawson reforms. The great advantage of, and the important element in, the Lawson reforms was that the standard rate of corporation tax was reduced from 52 to 35 per cent. Since then, the Treasury has further reduced the figure to 33 per cent., as we can see from clause 19.

Mr. Chris Smith: The reason I cited that period was that the Lawson reforms were announced in 1984, and they were introduced in 1986. In the intervening period, when the threat of the removal of capital allowances was hanging over British industry, manufacturing investment increased by 19·1 per cent. in 1984 and by 14·7 per cent. in 1985. It was clear that the existence of capital allowances, combined with the prospect of their removal, acted as a powerful incentive for investment to take place.

Mr. Tim Smith: The hon. Gentleman is almost right. The allowances were not announced in 1984 and introduced in 1986. There was a three-year transitional period, in which the rate of capital allowance was reduced by a percentage per annum. I think that the transitional period ran for three years, during which capital allowances were gradually phased out. I accept that, in that period, some investment was brought forward to take advantage of the higher rates of allowances.

When I worked in industry in the 1970s and a 100 per cent. capital allowance existed, there was no doubt that, at the end of the financial year, we carefully considered whether we could make any additional investment because the rate of allowance was so high. Such investment was made for the wrong reasons. It is quite wrong for any commercial decision to be taken for tax reasons.

If commercial decisions are taken for tax reasons and not on their commercial merits, taxation can distort decision making. That happened in the 1970s, when we had a high rate of corporation tax and high capital allowances. From my experience, I can tell the House that that is what happened. We should not focus on the quantity of investment only: we need to focus on its quality.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I shall give way in a moment.

Over the past 30 to 40 years, there was no shortage of investment in eastern European countries. The result of that investment is derelict and serves no useful purpose at all. The investment was totally and utterly useless, because it was not part of a market economy and the products produced were quite unsaleable.

Mr. Betts: The hon. Gentleman seems to be saying that taxation distorts commercial decisions. Is the logic of that that there should not be any taxation in the commercial arena and that, far from changing allowances, there should be no allowances to encourage investment?

Mr. Smith: The object of taxation is to raise revenue for the Treasury. If we were in the fortunate position of some countries, such as some states in the middle east, we would not need taxation, which has no virtue of its own. There is a good intellectual case for not having corporation tax and for taxing only company profits that are in the hands of shareholders. That is rather wide of the debate, but it is an interesting argument against corporation tax.

Any corporation tax is a burden on companies. The main source of investment in the United Kingdom is not borrowed money or shareholders' money, but retained profits. That is not widely understood. That forms the largest source of investment, and the larger the proportion of profit removed by the Treasury the smaller the proportion that remains for investment. That is why any sensible taxation system should be based on the lowest possible rate. That applies to income tax as much as to corporation tax, and there should be as few allowances as possible. That will lead to the fewest possible economic distortions.

Politicians always want to interfere in industry to try to achieve this, that or the other worthwhile objective. That did not work in the 1970s, and it would not work now.

Mr. Beith: The debate is a re-run of one that we had a year or 13 months ago when virtually the same amendment was tabled. Since then, I have not become any more convinced by the argument. I accept the analysis by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) of the worrying state of investment in manufacturing and I share some of his general observations. However, that is some way from being convinced that the proposed method of operating the tax system would bring about the sensible investment that is required. That is a large assumption. To start with, one has to distinguish between manufacturing and services, and that is a difficult and unreal distinction.

It is not necessarily detrimental to a country to have more investment in services than in manufacturing. The line is arbitrary, and activities which some people might consider wholly undesirable are to be found in manufacturing while activities which would pass the highest test of acceptability to every Labour Member are found on the service side of the line.

There is no established correlation between the size of a country's manufacturing sector and its general economic performance. Manufacturing is desirable, but it is not an index of overall economic success. It is therefore difficult to justify a pro-manufacturing or pro-services stance. That has not been shown to be a direct route to overall economic success.

In assessing the amendment, we must consider whether investment decisions taken on the basis of this year's tax relief would be significantly different, and, if so, whether they would be significantly better. It is arguable that they might not be significantly different and that one year's tax relief is not enough to tip the balance on many major investment decisions. Would it indeed be right for that to tip the balance, and what are we discounting against that tax relief? How marginal was the investment decision, and

what assumptions are made about future achievements for which one year's tax relief will pay? At best, it is a questionable proposition.

More effort must be directed to justifying the expenditure of large amounts, especially if the resources could be used to improve the system in other ways. I shall argue on a subsequent amendment that it might be better to give business the security of knowing that inflation would not erode the allowances that it enjoys under the tax system. That would enable it to predict with reasonable accuracy the relationship between the tax system, the company's financial position, and the value of its assets. No doubt the Minister will have estimated the cost of accepting the amendment.

In criticising the effectiveness of the proposal, and in saying that its effect, if any, might be to lead to bad investment decisions, I do not dissent from the expressed desire for greater investment—but the case is not proven that such measures will lead to good quality investment decisions in manufacturing.

5.15 pm

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): I rise to speak for the first time in the Chamber. When I was preparing my speech I asked someone whose recollection of when he made his maiden speech is dim and distant about the sort of reception that I could expect. I was told that the Chamber has three types of people: those on the Front Benches who are present because they have to be; those who have just spoken and who will stay for a decent interval before leaving; and those who would be waiting for me to sit down so that they could speak. I shall therefore do what I can to keep my speech brief.

My first thanks go to the people of Lewisham, West and I pledge to work on their behalf. My constituency has had a habit—I use the past tense—of changing its representatives at fairly regular intervals. I am sure that it has outgrown that, however, and can look forward to some decades of uncharacteristic tranquillity. The constituency covers a fairly anonymous part of inner suburban London—Forest Hill, Catford and Sydenham. I am sure that not many Members are familiar with it because it is so far from a tube station and the paucity of black cabs means that journalists, in particular, regard it as an extreme adventure to go that far. In common with millions of people throughout the British Isles, however, the people of Forest Hill, Sydenham and Catford are decent, hard-working and industrious and judge their public representatives harshly. I shall be happy to rest on their future judgment.

The constituency has had a collection of representatives in the House. The father of the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), who was in the Committee a short time ago, represented the constituency for a short time just after the war. John Maples was my immediate predecessor. Politically, he and I were about as opposed as it is possible to be on most things. In his maiden speech some nine years ago he called, rather inauspiciously, for the introduction of a poll tax. He even called it that at the time. He then spent some years learning to call it a community charge. In the world outside, one can always recognise Ministers or their predecessors because they are the only people who talk about the community charge—the rest of the world calls it the poll tax.

As I have said, I did not get on with Mr. Maples politically. He strongly supported the abolition of the Inner London education authority, a blow which inflicted grievous damage on the education prospects not just of children but of almost the entire population of inner London. He opposed the establishment of a London-wide authority, the absence of which has damaged the prospects of London people. Despite our political differences, however, I found Mr. Maples helpful and courteous and I wish him well in whatever lies before him. I am led to believe that he is well thought of in certain circles in the Conservative party, so perhaps we shall see him somewhere else. I suspect that the people of Lewisham have taken permanent leave of him.

The hon. Member for New Forest (Sir P. McNair-Wilson) represented Lewisham, West for a couple of years back in the 1960s, as did the now Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Did he?

Mr. Dowd: My hon. Friend should know that. I was reminded of the right hon. Gentleman's tenure of office in Lewisham only the other day when I heard a farmer being interviewed on the radio. The interview took place the day after the right hon. Gentleman returned from discussions in Brussels on the reform of the common agricultural policy. The farmer was making some fairly unenthusiastic comments about the Minister and at the same time there were strange noises in the background. In a broad west country accent, the farmer said, "No, that be not John Gummer—that be Crocus the pig." That was on "The World At One". The Minister is remembered in Lewisham, West.

Perhaps my most illustrious predecessor was Christopher Price. He made a considerable mark and is well remembered for his efforts. He is well remembered, especially in these times, for the work that he did in what became known as the Confait case. It was one of the earliest exposures of poor practices in the administration of justice and in the processes of the Metropolitan police. Christopher Price was tenacious for many years. I believe that many hon. Members who have followed in his footsteps to some extent examined the way in which he pursued justice in the Confait case. They have gone on to reveal many of the sad but damning miscarriages of justice that we have seen in recent times.

That is a broad outline of Lewisham, West and of those who have represented the constituency in the past.

I am grateful to be able to speak in the debate because my background is in engineering, which is the largest element of manufacturing industry. I disagree with those who have said that the plight of manufacturing industry is a tribute to our success. I am reminded of the comment that if we have many more successes like this, we shall all be ruined. The economy has always relied on a strong manufacturing base and it will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. That being so, we need to do what we can to nurture manufacturing industry.

I accept that an enlightened taxation regime alone will not enable manufacturing industry to thrive and flourish. That alone will not make the difference between success and failure. I am certain, however, that such a regime provides a framework around which much can be achieved. Without a sympathetic, understanding and supportive industry, Britain will dissolve and enter into a

[Mr. Dowd]

stately decline over the years as other nations overtake us one by one, whether they be our European competitors or the emerging industrial powers of the far east. Such a decline would have grave economic and social consequences for the people of Britain.

The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) asked whether, if we provide tax incentives for manufacturing, we shall discriminate against other forms of investment. My short answer is that we would and we should. Manufacturing strength is the key to the wellbeing of our competitors in Europe and throughout the world. Their pre-eminence in industrial and economic terms is built on their manufacturing base. Until we are able to emulate them, we shall be in terrible trouble.

The manufacturing sector is losing an enormous number of jobs. At the same time, production is in decline. That is one of the consequences of the lost jobs, many of which were skilled. We are losing skills and Britain is in danger of providing the tin bashers of Europe. That will happen if all the high-value-added jobs go abroad. If that happens, we shall be lucky if we are able to attract, by tax policies as much as anything else, investment by overseas multinationals for the assembly of high-tech goods which are manufactured elsewhere. There is the danger that we shall become little more than an assembly operation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) talked about training. In 1967, I became an apprentice telephone engineer with what was then the Post Office. That was before all this British Telecom nonsense and when the Post Office was something worth while. During 1967, when I was 16, about 25,000 apprentices were taken on by the Post Office; last year, British Telecom took on about 100. That is what happens when a manufacturing skills base is lost. Opportunities are lost for young people and communities become unbalanced.

I went on to work for Plessey, which was taken over by the consortium of GEC and Siemens. I am not entirely au fait with parliamentary privilege, so I shall not say precisely what I should like to put before the House. Those who have expressed their views of Arnold Weinstock outside the Chamber are currently before the courts, so I shall not be too provocative. There is a strong likelihood, however, that GEC-Plessey Telecoms, which is the only large-scale British telecommunications manufacturing company, will be entirely in German hands in the near future. Much of the high-value work that is carried out on modern telephone digital systems will be undertaken in Munich and Berlin and British plants will be reduced, if not closed.

I am talking about good telephone systems. Hon. Members on both sides of the House know that they are good because the one used in the Palace of Westminster was manufactured by Plessey and it functions extremely well. On the underside of the telephones that most of us have on our desks—large white ones with digital displays—there is the statement that they were made in the United Kingdom. That is actually a slight fiction. On the display side of the telephones are two red lights, the message waiting light and the call diverted light. Those are the only two items that were made in the United Kingdom. The telephones were shipped here as complete units, having been manufactured by Nitsuko in Japan. When they arrived here, the two light-emitting diodes were added. That qualified the telephones to be classified as made in the United Kingdom, but all the real work was done elsewhere.

I shall bring my remarks to a close because I have spoken for slightly longer than I intended. A healthy service sector is important, as everyone realises, but only as an adjunct to a firm manufacturing base. The British people will not survive if they are restricted solely to taking in one another's washing or cleaning one another's windows. There must be a firmer base for our prosperity across the range of engineering and industrial activities, which sadly have been in decline.

It is possible to recover. Everyone in the Chamber will recall that a few decades ago the title, "Made in Japan" was regarded with derision. We bought Japanese goods only if we could not afford better, or if they were the only goods available to us. These days, that title means quality and value for money. It is a lesson that we would do well to learn. It is Britain's future in manufacturing that will serve the British people best in the long run.

5.30 pm

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd) on his excellent maiden speech, which reflected well on himself and his future contributions in the House and his constituency. He described his constituency as an anonymous place, but there is little doubt in our minds this afternoon that, if he continues to make contributions such as he has made today, his constituency will quickly cease to be anonymous. I warmly congratulate him again.

Amendment No. 2 addresses the problem of the many firms which are postponing or abandoning much-needed investment decisions, prolonging the recession and further weakening Britain's long-term manufacturing strength. By enabling a company to offset more of its investment costs against its corporation tax liability, an increase in allowances would stimulate and bring forward much needed industrial investment in Britain.

The independent Institute of Fiscal Studies estimates that the change contained in the amendment would lead to an increase in investment of 6·5 per cent. That, in its estimation, represents an increase in manufacturing investment of about £3·3 billion. Because the proposal is time-limited to one year, essentially so, it provides a powerful incentive for investment decisions presently in the balance to be brought forward, and would thus aid much-needed recovery. That is why we are promoting this important amendment.

But let us be clear why we are doing so in the context of the wider argument that we need to have today about the importance of manufacturing in Britain, about the relationship between Government and industry in Britain and the conditions in which business can flourish. Let us be clear why manufacturing is so important.

Manufacturing has been, is and always will be the main tradeable part of our economy. It is literally Britain's means of paying its way in the world. The idea that we can simply replace our manufacturing base with the service sector is not only economically wrong but underestimates the extent to which a thriving service sector depends on a thriving manufacturing sector. As this month's balance of payments figures demonstrate all too clearly, the principal

constraint upon our economic recovery, even when it comes, will be the inadequate base of our industry and our inability to increase the tradeable part of the economy.

Of course, no one would claim that any lone action by Government, any single change in the tax regime or any specific increase in capital allowances would transform industry's prospects or performance. Instant solutions are not available, and the Labour party is not putting them forward. But that is not an argument for doing nothing, which seems to be a view held by many Conservative Members. Lying behind the amendment is the Labour party's contention that the Government simply must exercise much greater responsibility for supporting and encouraging the manufacturing sector.

Why, during the past 13 years, have the Government turned their back on manufacturing in the way they have? It was not just a consequence of misguided economic logic, but a product of political prejudice, with manufacturing repeatedly dismissed as an obsession of the Labour party.

By a uniquely destructive combination of policy measures, the Conservative party took a hatchet to manufacturing in Britain—hiking interest rates and the then value of the pound, massively increasing the price of electricity and gas supplied to industry, increasing VAT to 15 per cent. which affected service as well as manufacturing industry, and dismantling crucial instruments and areas of regional development policy. By all those means, that uniquely destructive combination of policies, the Conservative party wiped out 25 per cent. of Britain's manufacturing in its first five years in office.

The effects of those locust years were disastrously experienced in my constituency. With the closure or retraction of major steel, marine engineering, electronics and light manufacturing works over that period, no fewer than 10,000 jobs were lost in Hartlepool in that period.

In the current recession, the closures and the loss of jobs have continued. In the past two years new emerging high-tech firms have been left to flounder. The loss of high-precision engineering at Rolls-Royce in my constituency resulted in 450 redundancies. The closure of Isocom, making precision electronic parts, created a further 90 redundancies.

What a tragedy—not just that the huge, wanton destruction of productive capacity has taken place in new as well as traditional industries, but that, in the second recession, like the first created by the Government, the Conservative party failed to take the measures necessary to spur the reinvestment needed to build up manufacturing afresh.

There has never been any secret about the path to economic recovery of towns such as Hartlepool and the country as a whole. That path depends above all on innovation, on developing new products and new processes to replace those that have gone. It rests on converting scientific inventiveness and research into competitive production and tradeable goods. The Government recognise that need only in their rhetoric. They fail to take the action necessary to make it a reality.

In the past 10 years, the Conservative Government have cut and cut again public support for research and development in Britain. The result is that, for every £1 spent in Britain on discovering and developing new technologies, £1·50 is spent in Italy, £2 in France and £2·35 in Germany.

Government figures published only this week reveal that, despite the welcome increase in spending on research and development by many British companies, we still as a nation spend less than half the amount per employee on research and development that is spent by companies in the United States and Germany.

On the eve of the completion of the single market, the Germans, with the active backing of their Government, will invest about £3,000 for each manufacturing worker, and the Italians and the Americans will invest about the same. The Dutch will invest more than £6,000. Yet no more than £1,800 will be invested in each British manufacturing worker.

There is just no comparison between what is being done in Britain for manufacturing and what is being promoted by the Governments of all our industrial rivals. Yet we compete in the same global marketplaces and are subject to the same intense competitive pressures as our rivals.

It is not as if there is a shortage of inventiveness in Britain. There is no absence of enterprise in towns across Britain such as the one that I represent, yet what is so often researched in Britain is developed abroad. What is invented here is manufactured elsewhere. All too often, that is because neither the Government and their agencies nor the banks and their local branches will do enough to nourish new products and new firms from their inception. The Government still refuse to face up to that fact and to act on it.

We have heard that again today in contributions from Conservative Members. Their complacent, apathetic response to Labour's proposal this afternoon confirms the extent of the Government's indifference. It shows the depth of their insincerity when they talk of the needs of industry.

It is worthy of note that, in its Budget submission to the Chancellor in January, the CBI called for increases in investment allowances to help industry. It wanted the Chancellor to raise allowances for plant and machinery from 25 per cent. to 40 per cent., which is what Labour proposes today. I am happy to act as a mouthpiece for the CBI when it acts as a champion of British industry. There is no doubt what companies now want. Business men in my constituency are asking not only for much-needed economic stability but for banks that stick with them and a Government who are willing to use the instruments of regional policy to target incentives for location, expansion and innovation.

The message is clear, but who is listening in the upper reaches of Government? Following the general election, industry must have been heartened and encouraged to read some of the early newspaper stories that were spun from 10 Downing street. "Major focusses on industry", said the *Financial Times*; "Major puts support for industry at centre of post-election strategy", said another newspaper. Industry waited for the new initiative heralded by those headlines, eagerly anticipating the first decisive action of the new appointee, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). When the first blow was struck, however, it was not for the promotion of manufacturing but for the self-promotion of the man.

The right hon. Member for Henley decided to rename his job—not to emphasise industry, but to drop it entirely from his title. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry became simply the President of the Board of Trade. What signal was that supposed to send to Britain's manufacturing firms? The right hon. Gentleman cared so much for industry that he could not even be bothered to retain the word on his letter heading.

[Mr. Peter Mandelson]

As the weeks have gone on, we have heard one presidential keynote speech after another——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying from his own party's amendment.

Mr. Mandelson: I am trying to put the amendment in context.

The Chairman: It is for the hon. Gentleman to judge how to do that, but he has not succeeded so far.

Mr. Mandelson: Let me try to return to the main argument.

According to the right hon. Member for Henley, the Government want to "take determined, positive action" to deal with the trade deficit and to promote the interests of manufacturing industry. That is the objective of our amendment. The right hon. Gentleman, however, boasts openly that increasing his Department's activity would mean increasing that Department's expenditure, and he says that he refuses to do that.

One is left with the unavoidable impression that what the right hon. Gentleman wants is not better relations with industry and the promotion and growth of the manufacturing sector but better press relations for the President of the Board of Trade. He is seeking not greater public support for industry and the manufacturing sector —which we seek in our amendment—but greater public attention for himself. If that impression is correct, the right hon. Gentleman's reputation will soon become the most rapidly squandered in government.

There are some in the north-east who have a keen interest in the growth of the manufacturing sector, and have voiced support for the amendment, and who retain some hope for the right hon. Member for Henley. One prominent business leader in the region, a former public servant, commented: "From what one hears, there are one or two things that he would be willing to do"—but quickly added, "only if his colleagues were like-minded, and from what I hear that is not so." Judging by what Conservative Members have said so far, most of those colleagues are assembled on the Front Bench today—including, I suspect, the Minister who is to reply to the debate.

5.45 pm

No one can take any satisfaction from the fact that the right hon. Member for Henley seems to be losing his battle against the intransigence and indifference of the Treasury in the course of his quest for the promotion of the manufacturing sector. Many managements and work forces have shared objectives, and feel an ardent desire to act in partnership within their local communities; they want to boost their businesses, and they want our amendment to be accepted. When they call for such measures, they are not engaging in special pleading, and they do not want to be featherbedded. All they want is a framework of support in which they can prove themselves.

That is why the Labour party will continue to champion the cause of manufacturing, and to call for the adoption of increased capital allowances for investment. We must do that: we have no choice, because so much is at stake for our constituencies and for manufacturing industry throughout the country.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I did not intend to speak, but I should like to make three short points.

It is a bit rich for the Opposition to try to blame the Government for what has happened to manufacturing industry. We all appreciate the importance of manufacturing, especially those of us who represent northern constituencies, but we must ask where the greatest declines have taken place. One of the main components of our current balance of payments deficit is the car industry deficit. Who destroyed the British car industry? It was not destroyed by a lack of capital allowances, or by a Conservative Government. It was destroyed by the car industry itself—principally the unions, with strikes, go-slows, bad quality and restrictive practices. We all remember the time when inspectors could reject only a certain number of cars coming off the line on grounds of poor quality, because if they rejected more the workers would strike.

Who destroyed the shipbuilding industry? We all remember a time when the order books were full, but then the boilermakers said, "We want to drill the holes in the hulls and we shall strike unless we get work."

The Chairman: Order. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Let us return to the subject of capital allowances.

Mr. Townend: I think that what I am saying is relevant. The decline in manufacturing industry is not due to a lack of capital allowances; it is due to the trade union activities of the 1970s as much as anything else.

Training and education in the engineering industry have been mentioned. When the Opposition talk of the dearth of engineers, they always mention training, but they never mention education. We must remember that more and more of our able young people are going to university. Many youngsters who would once have taken apprenticeships at Rolls-Royce now opt for university instead. Regrettably, however, too few read engineering: they read history, sociology or business studies.

Those are the future captains of industry. In Japan, far more graduates have engineering degrees. When they move on to general management and become captains of Japanese industry, they have an engineering background. I think that we should encourage far more people to read engineering at university. Not enough are encouraged to do so while they are at school, and many do not want to because qualifying as an engineer is very hard work—much harder than reading history, sociology or business studies. Anyone who denies that has not studied engineering.

I do not think that capital allowances would play a major part in encouraging investment. Investment is being deterred by the lack of demand and by high interest rates. Despite reductions of 5 per cent. or 6 per cent., our interest rates are still high in real terms. Industry is looking for lower interest rates. If we achieve higher demand and lower interest rates, investment will follow. Even if capital allowances of 100 per cent. were offered, without demand investment would not be made—*[Interruption.]* Labour Members do not like to hear the truth.

The Government might consider a change which would be helpful and just. Capital allowances are based on written-down values. It therefore takes a long time to write off machinery. I ask my hon. Friend the Financial

Secretary seriously to consider adopting the straight line method whereby machinery is written off within four or five years.

Labour Members should realise that the Government have created an environment for investment, a low tax regime, and good industrial relations. As a result, we have had more than 50 per cent. of Japanese and American inward investment into Europe, and we can see the resurgence of the British motor industry with the Nissan plant in Sunderland and the Toyota plant in Derbyshire. In 18 months or two years' time with those Japanese companies based in this country, we shall win back our export markets and reduce the deficit in motor vehicles.

Dr. Roger Berry (Kingswood): It is with much pleasure that I rise to make my maiden speech. I have long wondered what the corridors of power were like. Little did I realise that, one day, I would have a desk in a corridor and, a few days later, a telephone. No doubt, given the ministerial statement last week, docklands is the next place on the agenda for Members.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd), I received advice from colleagues about making my maiden speech and was told about the traditions. I put to one side my normal response to the word "tradition"—recalling that tradition is the democracy of the dead—and listened to what they told me. They said, "You must be non-controversial, must say nice things about your predecessor and your constituency and, above all, must be brief." They did not say, "You must never plan to make your maiden speech in the Committee stage of the Maastricht Bill before you know the outcome of the Danish referendum."

My predecessor, Rob Hayward, paid me the compliment of referring to me in the Chamber before the general election. I assume that he did so in response to the vigour of my activities as Labour leader on Avon county council. In so doing, he established a new tradition in the House. I am aware of the tradition that new Members say nice things about their predecessor. Mr. Hayward established the tradition that existing Members say nice things about those who are destined to replace them. Notwithstanding our substantial political differences, I should like to place on record my gratitude for the work that he did for many constituents in Kingswood. I wish him well in the future.

The constituency of Kingswood straddles the boundary between the city of Bristol and the borough of Kingswood. Half the constituency lies within the city of Bristol, parts of which were previously represented by Arthur Palmer and my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). The half of the constituency in the borough of Kingswood—if hon. Members are still with me—was previously represented by my good friend, Terry Walker, and the hon. Member for Wansdyke (Mr. Aspinwall). I should like to thank them for my inheritance.

That list shows that Kingswood has a rich and diverse political history. It also has a rich and diverse industrial history. It used to be an important area of coal mining —it is no longer so—and it used to be an important area for the boot and shoe manufacturing industry, but today only one firm is engaged in that work. Today, most of my constituents work in aerospace, defence-related industries, other manufacturing industries, financial services, local government and the health service. Many jobs have been lost in all those sectors.

Unemployment, or, according to the Government's statistics, the number of unemployed claimants—a rather different figure—has trebled in Kingswood in the past two years. I say to the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), who yesterday described the unemployed as "layabouts" and received no rebuke from his colleagues, that that is due not to a sudden outbreak of laziness in my constituency but to the fact that many manufacturing companies have shed hundreds of jobs. The list—Rolls-Royce, British Aerospace, DRG Cartons, Bendix Engineering, Avon Tin Printers—is very long. Hundreds of people have been laid off.

My unemployed constituents are not layabouts. They spend day after day and week after week looking for work. They are unemployed because work is not available. On their behalf, I resent the comment about them yesterday. My remarks reflect the views not only of my unemployed constituents but of unemployed people throughout the country and, I hope, of the majority of people.

Unemployment and record interest rates have caused mortgage misery for thousands of families in my constituency, as elsewhere. There has been a record number of home repossessions because people have lost their jobs and because mortgage interest rates have been so high.

The problem of homelessness in Bristol and Kingswood is second only to that in London. That is a result of the economic position in which my constituents find themselves. They want the Government not simply to sit on their hands but to take appropriate action. That is why I strongly support amendment No. 2. Measures to stimulate investment in manufacturing are not everything, and can never be, but they are an important part of a programme that any sane Government would propose to restore manufacturing and to reduce unemployment.

Yes, of course other things can be done to reduce unemployment, such as releasing local council receipts to allow them to build the homes that people need and to repair crumbling schools. Yes, of course there should be an action programme for the long-term unemployed and greater investment in training.

I say in response to the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) that, yes, more investment should be made in education as well. Before becoming a Member, I worked in higher education. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the problem of underfunding in higher education is serious. I can tell him that Avon county council is working hard to train and educate young people. It is not helped when the Government's spending target requires the county council to make cuts of 12 per cent. or 13 per cent. in education year after year. The hon. Member for Bridlington was right—investment in education is important—but I would digress too far if I said any more about that.

6 pm

The importance of manufacturing was outlined earlier. Reference was made to the Lawson report. Mr. Lawson, a former Chancellor of the Exchequer, made a big point of saying that he failed to understand why manufacturing was especially important. I offer two reasons. First, manufacturing is the engine of the economy. It is the sector of the economy which, above all, is engaged in innovation and developing new products. It is an engine for growth, which is why the economies that grow the most rapidly are those with a strong manufacturing sector.

Secondly, as has been said, our balance of trade is crucially dependent on our performance in manufacturing. Our economy is faced with a 0·5 per cent. predicted growth rate for this year—the worst growth rate for any of the European Community countries—and has an annual current account deficit heading for between £10 billion and £12 billion this year, following the most tentative signs of economic recovery imaginable. If such an economy is not in need of investment, I do not know what kind of economy is.

For those who can see, there is enough evidence to suggest that Britain's lack of competitiveness is a serious matter. Restoring that competitiveness is an essential part of any strategy to reduce unemployment in my constituency or anywhere else. For that reason, I urge hon. Members to support the amendment.

Mr. Alan Milburn (Darlington): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Dr. Berry). His wit, passion and insight are a credit to the House and, like other hon. Members, I shall look forward to his contributions in the future.

I support the amendments tabled in the name of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition because, without them, the Finance Bill is a damp squib. I say that for two reasons. First, it is out of date even before it becomes the law of the land. The very economic predictions on which it is based have already been revised downwards as economic indicator after economic indicator and forecast after forecast have forced the Government to acknowledge that economic recovery is as far away as ever.

Secondly, the Bill tackles the wrong problems. The essential economic problem facing the country is not over-taxation but chronic under-investment and short-termism. The Bill will merely exacerbate rather than tackle that particularly British problem. Crucially, the Bill does nothing to encourage investment in the key manufacturing sector that forms two thirds of the country's visible trade, which is why the amendments proposed by the Labour party are so important. They will begin to close the yawning investment gap that has developed between Britain and our competitors.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, in the decade after 1978 the United Kingdom's proportion of gross domestic product devoted to manufacturing investment fell from 3·3 per cent. to only 2·4 per cent., while that of France and Germany grew to 3·5 per cent. and 3·9 per cent. respectively. It is therefore little wonder that this country's balance of trade in manufactured goods went into the red for the first time since the industrial revolution and has stayed there ever since. Quite simply, our industries cannot compete because they lack investment in up-to-date plant and equipment. Between 1980 and 1989, the amount spent on manufacturing investment per employee in this country was only £1,980 a year. By contrast, in the United States and Germany it was £2,850 per employee, in France it was £3,300 and, finally and not surprisingly, in Japan it was £5,360.

The Government's attitude towards the crisis is one of utter complacency. It is as if the £1,300 million trade gap that opened last month did not matter, as if the manufacturing import bill had not risen by 8 per cent. in the previous year or as if the Confederation of British Industry's prediction of a further loss of 200,000 manufacturing jobs in 1992 was absolutely irrelevant.

My region, with its reliance on manufacturing, will again inevitably be one of the losers because of the failure of perception on the part of Ministers. In this recession, my constituency of Darlington has already lost 1,300 manufacturing jobs. Between September 1978 and September 1991, manufacturing employment fell by about 36 per cent. in the north as a whole. It will come as no surprise that in the decade after 1979 investment fell by 43 per cent. in my region —the largest collapse of any region in the United Kingdom. Almost £3,500 million more would have been invested in manufacturing in the north between 1980 and 1987 if investment had remained at its 1979 level.

Two recent surveys of local businesses corroborate the picture of declining investment. According to the Association of British Chambers of Commerce's quarterly survey of investment intentions, the north-east's largest companies revised their investment plans downward by 5 per cent. during the first quarter of this year. In its first quarter review of business conditions in the region, the Northern Development Company reported that the balance of companies increasing exports sank to its lowest level for the seven quarters in which it had been undertaking its survey. Nearly one third of northern manufacturing companies were reported as cutting their work force. Inevitably, in this climate, the vast majority of surveyed firms were delaying their investment decisions.

The north's skills and enterprise are being fatally compromised by a Government who have given up the ghost with regard to investment in the regions. Indeed, the Government are contributing directly to disinvestment in areas such as the north as they deliberately dismantle regional policy. Only this week I received figures from Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry that show that, since 1978, Government spending on regional financial assistance had collapsed by 85 per cent. in real terms in the north. In that year, the Labour Government were spending £158·8 million on regional assistance in the north. Last year, by contrast, the Conservatives spent just £23·6 million at 1978-79 prices.

While the Government have let Britain's regions go to the wall, other Governments have helped their regions to adapt to new industries. A renewed commitment to regional investment is now needed to give our regions the chance to compete effectively and to benefit from the single European market; otherwise, we face the prospect of a two-tier Europe developing, with regions like the north of England doomed to decline on the periphery of our continent. Such regions are brimming with ideas, innovation and enterprise, but they need investment and the companies there need an incentive to invest.

The Labour party's amendments represent a step in the right direction, towards a reinvigorated manufacturing base and a sustainable economic recovery, giving an immediate boost to manufacturing investment. Any failure to act now will forestall long-term economic recovery and, ironically, prove to be the Government's undoing. The chickens are already coming home to roost, as a weakened industrial base proves incapable of meeting even the weakened consumer demand during this recession. Inevitably, imports will go on rising and, with them, prices will rise. We shall no doubt then repeat the

same mistakes that were made during the 1980s. The brakes will be slammed on once again and we shall be plunged back into recession.

There is another way—one that will stimulate investment to help British industry to compete and to export and, in particular, help regions like the north. The Confederation of British Industry reported in February this year, prior to the Budget, that it was seeking increased capital allowances along the lines that the Labour party is proposing today. *CBI News* in February said:

"encouraging investment does not mean taking risks with inflation. Indeed, a more flexible, more efficient and more productive business sector is essential if the economy is to grow without inflationary pressures developing and a high level of investment is a key element in achieving this."

If the Government are not prepared to listen to the Opposition and take note of our amendments, I hope that at least they will listen to the voice of business.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): May I add to the words of my hon. Friends my congratulations to hon. Members who have made their maiden speeches this afternoon, particularly my hon. Friends the Members for Kingswood (Dr. Berry) and for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd), who made highly articulate and impassioned speeches on behalf of their constituents. Although she is no longer in her place, may I also congratulate the hon. Member for Newbury (Mrs. Chaplin), who made a highly articulate and cogent maiden speech.

I wish to speak in support of the amendment in the name of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and about its relevance to the engineering industries of the United Kingdom, particularly companies with a traditional association with the defence sector, which needs practical and tangible help from the Government if it is to succeed in moving successfully into new product markets.

Some of the great industrial and manufacturing centres of the United Kingdom are represented on the Opposition Benches tonight. My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) spoke passionately about the last 12 years in his constituency and the effects of the Government's policies on manufacturing investment and employment in south Wales. All my hon. Friends could repeat such stories of the misery caused by the Government's policies on manufacturing investment. In the past two years alone, my constituency has lost 7,500 jobs, all in the manufacturing sector. I remind the House that Barrow and Furness has the highest proportion of people employed in the manufacturing industry of any constituency in the United Kingdom. We are suffering directly and visibly because of the Government's consistent failure to support engineering and manufacturing industries. The amendment proposes a new regime of fiscal encouragement to stimulate fresh investment in the engineering sector, which will benefit companies in my constituency.

The year 1991 was, without doubt, a bad year for manufacturing industry. The Engineering Employers Federation reported that engineering output continued to fall last year and no prospect of growth is predicted for the mechanical engineering sector either. The United Kingdom machine tool industry sees no sign of improvement this year. Manufacturing output has fallen from 11·8 per cent. of GDP in 1970 to about 8 per cent. this year. OECD figures reveal that real growth in manufacturing output in the United Kingdom is the smallest of all our principal economic competitors. Growth in the United Kingdom was only 0·8 per cent. compared to nearly 10 per cent. in Japan, more than 4 per cent. in the United States, nearly 3 per cent. in Italy and nearly 2 per cent. in West Germany.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Is it unreasonable to ask the hon. Gentleman to consider, in view of the attack that he has made on the Government's economic policies in the past 12 years, that, had the defence policies of the Labour party as evinced in 1979, 1983 and 1987 been followed, Barrow would have been a desert?

6.15 pm

Mr. Hutton: That is an utterly predictable and hopelessly outdated response. It must be apparent to the hon. Gentleman that my constituents wanted a Labour Government because they returned a Labour Member of Parliament to represent them in the House. *[Interruption.]* I shall return to the main theme of my comments and ignore the hon. Gentleman's sedentary and ignorant comments.

The last two recessions have reduced employment in engineering from 3·3 million in 1979 to only 1·9 million in 1991. The employment prospects of engineering companies continue to decline. The past 20 years have seen a consistent decline in engineering and the past 18 months of severe recession have only compounded those problems. That weakness in engineering can be clearly seen in the figures for manufacturing investment, which show that total manufacturing investment was lower in 1991 than in 1979, despite the windfall that came to the Treasury from North sea oil. Manufacturing investment has fallen as a percentage of GDP. The Government predict further falls in overall investment and I suspect that those falls may be larger than they envisage.

The challenge facing the Government, therefore, is to pursue a much more productive approach to encouraging investment and to accept that they should pursue any instrument or tool available to them to stimulate that vital investment in engineering. It is the Government's responsibility to the defence industries of Britain to support companies such as Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. in my constituency, which is anxious to move into new product areas. The amendment will support the efforts of many companies in my constituency.

For all those reasons, the amendment is important to the engineering industries of Britain. Increased capital allowances are an effective means of promoting new investment, as shown by many of the reports which my hon. Friends quoted this afternoon. We recognise that improving capital allowances in manufacturing industry, particularly engineering, will not produce a sudden splurge of new investment but it will produce an essential source of new investment for engineering companies and encourage them to invest. By time-limiting the new allowances to one year, as the amendment proposes, investment decisions will be brought forward. Our amendment would go some way towards putting right the signal neglect of manufacturing industry since 1979, and I endorse it.

Mr. Betts: First, I congratulate you, Mr. Lofthouse, on your appointment and my colleagues the hon. Members for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd) and for Kingswood (Dr. Berry) on their excellent maiden speeches on this crucial issue of investment in our manufacturing industries.

[Mr. Betts]

After Margaret Thatcher was elected Prime Minister, a funny thing happened to some of my constituents: they had problems getting to sleep. Before anyone jumps to the wrong conclusion and thinks that perhaps the spectre of the lady on our television sets had something to do with it, let me tell the House that the problem had to do with noise. For years—indeed, for generations—my constituents who live near the industrial heartland of Sheffield, the lower Don valley, had gone to bed at night and listened to the rhythmic thumping of the drop hammers and forges which were the basis of the great steel and engineering industries of our city. Suddenly, within three or four years, that rhythmic sound stopped. Many of my constituents found that after the decline of that industry they could no longer get to sleep because they had been so conditioned to the noise and its lulling effect that its absence led to insomnia. Within four years, the powerhouse, not merely of Sheffield industry but of the British steel and engineering industry, was cut out. Highly specialised and highly skilled though it was, it became largely redundant.

The decline began with short-time working. It continued with redundancies. It was followed by further redundancies, closures and the sale of machines, often to other countries that still saw a need for manufacturing investment. It was further followed by the removal of factories' roofs and then by the demolition of the factories; piles of rubble were left in their place. Then the Government acted: we had the introduction of derelict land grants. The Government's response to the collapse of industry in Sheffield was to offer grants to clear up the sites once the factories had been demolished and 40,000 jobs in one valley had been destroyed in fewer than 10 years. That is the record that my constituents have to look back on.

Certainly, a lack of investment by many of the firms played a part—that is why this amendment on manufacturing investment is so important—and subsidised imports from other countries played a part; yet, throughout that time, the one consistent factor in the Government's response was complete inaction—the same sort of inaction that characterises their approach to the Finance Bill and the amendment.

I am not one of those who argue that wealth can be created only by manufacturing industry. Nurses and home helps are an important part of wealth creation. However, historically, manufacturing industry has been a key element in the British balance of payments. Until 1983, we always had a surplus on our trade in manufacturing industry. It is significant that since 1983 we have had not a surplus in any one year. Nor am I seeking to argue that we can replace like with like. We cannot recreate the drop hammers and forges of the past. Yet the amendment is important because it is a signal that we do not regard British manufacturing industry as dead, although in many ways it is profoundly unhealthy and in need of the sort of assistance that our amendment would provide.

In the initial years of the 1980s while the Government failed to act, Labour local authorities often sat down with industrialists to work out in partnership some alternative way forward. Eventually, the Government introduced development corporations and had the idea of city challenge. Both ideas were imposed without consultation. They were flawed, but at least they signalled some recognition by the Government that some action was necessary, in particular to stave off the threat of a further decline in our older industrial areas.

Tonight we ask the Government to listen to our argument that so far action has been too little, too late and that therefore they should support our proposals. It is not only manufacturing industry that needs that response. Look at the construction industry and the unemployment there. Construction firms are going to the wall. Think how much they would benefit from any resurgence in manufacturing investment because it would create work for them.

Our suggestion of capital allowances is a positive move forward. What alternative are the Government offering? So far as I can see, little—indeed, nothing. That should not surprise us. Their record is deplorable. We are the only country in the European Community to have a lower level of manufacturing investment now than we had in 1979. There has been an 11 per cent. fall in manufacturing investment in the past 12 months and a 27 per cent. fall during the recession. Those figures come from Government Departments, so the Government cannot deny them. Manufacturing output is only 2 per cent. higher than it was in 1979. How does that square with the claims for a great economic miracle? Since 1979, growth in manufacturing output has been less in Britain than in any other major industrialised country. Even the CBI predicts further falls this year.

For the crucial issue of our balance of payments, that basic lack of manufacturing capacity means that as soon as there is any spark of recovery imports will be sucked in because our industry will not be able to produce the goods. The basic problem of a lack of investment in manufacturing industry will put a cap on the effective limit of any recovery that the Government can achieve. It will cap their ability to deal with the fundamental issue of unemployment.

I will not argue today that agreement to the proposal for capital allowances will bring back those rhythmic sounds that might help some of my constituents to sleep, but at least it might do something to bring back investment to manufacturing industry and that might help some of my constituents to find jobs.

Mr. Ken Purchase (Wolverhampton, North-East): I rise to speak in support of the amendment and then to speak specifically about my area, the west midlands, and Wolverhampton in particular, which it would assist. I do not need to rehearse the arguments or review history again —it is plain to see. There has been a massive reduction in employment opportunities in the west midlands, where manufacturing has been hit particularly hard. My colleagues have reviewed many of the discussions and introduced the statistics that underlie and illustrate what we have been seeing in the United Kingdom, especially in the west midlands, in recent years.

If we adopt the amendment, we will send a signal to industry that the Government support a revival and reinvestment strategy for engineering and manufacturing production. In the meantime, it is not the perception of industry that the Government care what is happening to it. Therefore, the adoption of the amendment would send a good signal.

6.30 pm

In Wolverhampton and the black country, industry and housing have long lived cheek by jowl and, in recent years, steps have been taken to ease the tensions that frequently arise between two. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 places a duty on local authorities and companies to reduce and clean up emissions from their plants in urban areas and so prevent the pollution that has been such a problem for so many years.

We all support the view that emissions should be purified and pollution dealt with, but there are problems. Wolverhampton has many foundries, and I understand from the local authority that more than 140 of the processes used in them will require authorisation under the 1990 Act. Existing companies have been given time to introduce the changes, and that is helpful, but new companies have to meet the requirements from day one.

The Minister talked at some length about the need to encourage new starts and boasted of the Government's record in that regard, and we need not refer to the number of companies that have failed in the same period. It is important, however, that we recognise the difficulties that both new and existing companies—particularly in the foundry industry in my area—will experience as a result of the 1990 Act.

I remind hon. Members that it costs £900 simply to apply for authorisation. To some small companies, that is a great deal of money. One company in my area consists of just a couple of blokes with a process for brass-plating door furniture and other household goods. The cost of applying, and the cost of improving the quality of factory emissions, will place a great burden on such companies. The amendment would be of some help in the important process of improving the quality of industrial emissions in my area.

The metal melting industry also has considerable problems and would benefit from the amendment. It is expected that, for quite a small company, the capital outlay involved in complying with the new regulations will be up to £10,000. At a practical level, assistance with the work would be helpful. The Department of Trade and Industry is not over-helpful at present. No company seeking merely to meet the requirements of the 1990 Act qualifies for help, and the amendment would be of considerable assistance in solving that problem, especially as the cost to larger companies with a number of stacks is expected to be as high as £500,000.

Wolverhampton and the west midlands desperately need investment. They also need to comply with the new requirements. I ask the Minister to recognise the help that the amendment would give to many small companies—companies for which he professes concern in overcoming their difficulties in improving their processes, and in meeting the demands that are rightly to be made of them. Given what is happening elsewhere in the world—I am thinking of Brazil in particular—it is especially important that we recognise the need to meet such environmental standards. I repeat that the amendment would help many small companies in Wolverhampton and the west midlands to do that.

Mr. Dorrell: I could spend a long time on the point made by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase), as I am familiar with the problems of foundries. One in my own constituency faced exactly the environmental problems that the hon. Gentleman described. His argument was not quite the same as that of most Opposition Members who spoke in support of the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith).

We have heard two maiden speeches. The first was from the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd), and I am grateful to him for the good wishes that he offered to John Maples. Conservative Members have good reason to be grateful to John because, during the general election, he was one of the most effective exponents of our case. He exposed the weakness of the shadow Cabinet's argument and helped to ensure that in the end, faced with the choice between the economic policy and Budget proposed by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and the policies espoused by the Government, the electorate chose the latter. [HON. MEMBERS: "Except his constituents."] That is the great loss of the people of Lewisham, West and, as their new Member of Parliament was gracious enough to say, the House is confident in the expectation that John will soon be back here with us.

The hon. Member for Kingswood (Dr. Berry) also made his maiden speech, and I was grateful to him for what he said about Rob Hayward. The Boundary Commission is to continue its work during this Parliament and I am sure that Conservative Members, at least, will miss the expert advice that Rob gave us on the activities of the commission and their implications.

The hon. Member for Kingswood stressed the importance that he attached to manufacturing industry as the solution to the unemployment problem in his constituency, and it is that issue to which I shall now refer. I do not disagree with the proposition that manufacturing industry has a part to play in job creation and economic expansion, but it is only a partial role. The Opposition have argued that a special case should be made for manufacturing. I agree with the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) that their arguments are simply not convincing.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) asked us to go back to, and to back, manufacturing. The Government have been accused of attaching inadequate importance to manufacturing and of being biased against it. I simply do not accept that any of those propositions is true. I do not need persuading of the importance of manufacturing or of the contribution that it can and does make to a buoyant economy. I came from a manufacturing background myself, and my family business is still involved in manufacturing. If I took seriously the strictures of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), I might even have declared an interest in manufacturing at the beginning of my speech. I do, however, need persuading that the contribution that the manufacturing sector makes to the economy is better, more vital or more special than—or different from—the contribution that any other sector of the economy makes to economic output.

I will explain why I take that view. First, as my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed said, the definition of manufacturing as an economic activity is very arbitrary—so arbitrary, in fact, that two Opposition Members spent a significant part of their time espousing the causes of companies which were not even in the manufacturing sector. The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney asked why Peter Walker deemed it desirable to shift people from mining into banking. Neither of those

[Mr. Dorrell]

activities is manufacturing. The hon. Member for Lewisham, West spoke about his former employment in British Telecom. The vast bulk of BT's activities are not manufacturing.

Mr. Dowd: I said that I started with the GPO 25 years ago. That was where I was trained. I subsequently spent 25 years with Plessey which is now GEC-Plessey Telecoms. I did not work for British Telecom.

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman was also at pains to say that he worked in British Telecom in the days when there was none of the "privatisation nonsense". As one of my colleagues remarked, in those days people had to wait four months for a telephone.

I am trying to remind the House that the definition of manufacturing is relatively arbitrary. As my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield explained, when Mars moved its distribution activity from in-house and subcontracted it to a third party, that moved activity—entirely arbitrarily—out of manufacturing into the distribution and, therefore, the service sector.

Mr. Rowlands: The Minister is labouring the point. However, the Government support selective financial assistance with great enthusiasm. In communities such as mine, the SFA is defined in terms of manufacture investment. The Minister should not stress the point too much or he will undermine one of the central points and policies which has been supported by successive Secretaries of State for Wales.

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman will find it difficult to establish a split on that subject. It is important that all economic activity is desirable. Manufacturing, although desirable, is no more or less desirable than other forms of economic activity.

The suggestion that the Government are uncommitted to manufacturing because it has been declining as a share of our total economic activity over many years, including under Labour Governments, does not stand up. As my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield rightly said, the share of manufacturing in total economic activity is declining in all developed economies, partly because of the point about definition that I have made, and partly because when consumers have marginal income available to them they spend it disproportionately on other activities rather than on the purchase of goods. That leads to an expansion of other activities within a free economy.

I do not find attractive the particular method of promoting manufacturing espoused by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury. The House should concentrate for a second on the fact that the amendment would not even channel capital allowances to the totality of manufacturing industry. The flow would be to those parts of manufacturing activity designated by order. The amendment seems to imply that Labour believes that it is desirable that capital allowances should be available to sectors defined by order by politicians. That seems to me to be the least desirable kind of capital allowance.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I was disappointed to hear the Minister refer to manufacturing industry as though it were equivalent to any other part of our economy. Nigel Lawson made that point early in his period as Chancellor of the Exchequer, but then seemed to withdraw from it. I am disappointed to see the idea resurrected. Clearly the most important aspect of manufacturing industry is that it is responsible for most of our exports. Japan and Germany are more successful than the United States and Britain because of the development of their manufacturing industries. We have not heard such comments from a Minister since they were made by Nigel Lawson some years ago.

Mr. Dorrell: The export record of British manufacturing industry is substantially more successful than most observers often recognise. Our share of world trade in manufactures is estimated to have risen in 1991 for the third year running. I am not trying to belittle the importance of manufacturing. At the beginning of my remarks, I stressed that I come from a manufacturing background and I represent a constituency where a substantial proportion of people are employed in manufacturing. However, I do not support the assertion, which is the necessary consequence of arguing that manufacturing is more important, that those employed in distribution, banking, services or mining and primary production are less important than those involved in manufacturing. I do not believe that that is true.

Whether or not we accept that manufacturing is separate, special and should be particularly assisted, there is the wider question whether capital allowances are a desirable way of promoting investment in manufacturing industry specifically or in the generality of industry.

6.45 pm

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made it clear in his Budget speech that the Government had reconsidered that point again very recently. All the considerations of issues in the run-up to the Budget are supposed to take place in total secrecy. However, in the interests of open government my right hon. Friend the Chancellor drew the veil aside slightly on Budget secrecy in his speech when he said:

> "I have considered this proposition very carefully. I would be as concerned as anyone if I thought that the corporation tax system introduced in 1984 was acting as a drag on profitable investment . . . The evidence suggests that the cost of higher capital allowances to the Exchequer would be several times greater than the resulting increase in investment over the next few years. I have therefore concluded that, whatever its superficial attractions, an increase in capital allowances would not be a sensible use of the resources available."—[*Official Report*, 10 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 750.]

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor considered the point carefully and recently, and concluded that it was not "a sensible use of resources".

It is legitimate to ask why he reached that conclusion.

Mr. Chris Smith: The Financial Secretary to the Treasury must realise that studies undertaken by the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Keele university, both of which I tend to believe rather more than I believe the Chancellor of the Exchequer, find to the contrary. The cost of introducing capital allowances would be far outmatched by the benefit in terms of investment which would then take place.

Mr. Dorrell: That point may be espoused by Keele university, but it is not espoused by the Government. Before I was interrupted, I was about to explain why we reached the conclusion that we did. I suspect that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor reached the conclusion that he did because he looked at the evidence. He found that if we

consider the record of business investment over the past 15 years and compare the investment records of British business under the regime espoused by the Labour party and put in place by Labour during the five years of the 1974 Parliament with the five years of the 1987 Parliament, it is clear that the average rate of investment over the five years of the 1987 Parliament was 52 per cent. higher in real terms than under the regime espoused by the Labour party. I am not trying to dissemble between different types of investment. Manufacturing investment was 15 per cent. higher in the 1987 Parliament than it was in the 1974 Parliament. The facts do not support the assertion that capital allowances increase the flow of investment in the way argued by the Labour party.

If we compare the profitability of British industry now with earlier years, not only has investment continued to flow quickly into the business sector under this Government; the profitability of British business is also significantly higher. That is important for two reasons. First, it signifies that the investment is better and higher quality investment, delivering a better economic return. Secondly, it is important for the reason made clear by my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield—that the largest single source of capital to finance investment is retained profits. If we want investment to expand, one of the best ways to deliver that is to improve the rate of profitability so that business has more money available to use for that desirable investment.

Mr. Sheldon: I apologise for intervening again, but I read with some care the passage from the Chancellor's speech that the Minister has quoted. The Chancellor had obviously considered the matter and, as a result, I am sure that the House took note of it. However, he was referring to capital allowances generally, not to manufacturing capital allowances or plant and machinery. Those are the areas about which we should be concerned. If the Minister considered that more limited area, he would find the arithmetic rather different.

Mr. Dorrell: I made it clear that I had moved on from the speciality of manufacturing to the general matter of capital allowances. For the reasons that I stated earlier, I do not accept the proposition that we should seek to bias the tax system in favour of manufacturing. I was then considering the wider matter of whether capital allowances were a sensible proposition in themselves, and I concluded that they were not.

The amendment relates to the wrong issue. It would aim to generate an investment-led recovery, but history has shown time and again that investment-led recoveries are chimeras. Investment decisions by business should not be led by political considerations as to how to get a tax relief. Investment decisions should be the result of the assessment by business men themselves of the sales prospects and productivity gains which will deliver profits to business and economic strength to the community.

The statistics show clearly that the regime that we have espoused has delivered not only more investment, but higher profitability of investment, and therefore the creation of a virtual circle which will deliver an expanding economy capable of financing further investment for the future and, most important of all, the expanding job opportunities that hon. Members rightly want as the result of a successful economy. I do not believe that the Opposition have made their case.

Mr. Boateng: This is the first of our Committee debates on the Finance Bill. I suspect that it will be one of our shortest debates, because Opposition Members intend to fight the Bill with all the vigour that we possess, and to fight it when necessary late into the night. We possess great vigour.

The debate takes place against a background of the most abject failure of manufacturing industry under the stewardship of the Conservatives. For example, 562,000 jobs have been lost in the manufacturing sector during this recession alone. According to the CBI, employment in manufacturing is forecast to fall by 143,000 between the first and fourth quarters of this year and by 214,000 by the end of 1993. No other country in the European Community has seen such a dramatic fall in manufacturing employment since 1979.

The speech of the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) was redolent with memory for hon. Members who have heard his speeches on previous Finance Bills.

Mr. Tim Smith: It was the same speech.

Mr. Boateng: Yes, it was the same speech, almost—we had a copy of the hon. Gentleman's contribution last year. We were told by him, "Never mind the quantity of investment, think only of the quality." I am bound to say that the contributions by Conservative Members—all three of them—were lacking in both respects.

In respect of the quality and quantity of Opposition Members' speeches, we could not have hoped for better. One by one my hon. Friends the Members for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd), for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson), for Kingswood (Dr. Berry), for Darlington (Mr. Milburn), for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) and for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) spoke, and one by one they impressed by their knowledge and command of the subject. I would not do justice to their contributions if I did not pay particular regard to the maiden speeches by my hon. Friends the Members for Wolverhampton, North-East and for Kingswood.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): What about my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mrs. Chaplin)?

Mr. Boateng: The hon. Member for Newbury is not present, but she made a useful contribution. We agree with her on one point at least—the sooner Greenham common is returned to its true purpose, the better it will be. *[Interruption.]* Yes, the enjoyment of the common land by the ordinary people of that neighbourhood. We hope to celebrate that early return.

It is useful to consider the amendment and Conservative Members' responses to it. We have brought forward a modest amendment—it is not outrageous and it should not offend those who are concerned about the health of our manufacturing industry—in a constructive spirit. We found support for the amendment from the CBI, engineering employers and the Trades Union Congress. They recognise the extent of the manufacturing crisis. They recognise, although it appears that the Government do not, the depth of the recession.

Only yesterday, Government spin doctors were at work in no less a journal than the *Evening Standard*. *[Interruption.]* All right, it is hardly a journal of record, I grant hon. Members, but at least it is the authentic voice

[Mr. Boateng]

of the modern Conservative party. What does the authentic voice of the modern Conservative party have to say about the recession. It says:

"The Chancellor is still convinced the recovery will become firmly established this year."

We have heard that before. Then it trots out some of the usual suspects for the cause of the recession and for the non-appearance of the recovery. We have heard many of them before, so I need mention them only in passing. They include a lack of consumer confidence. We were told, of course, that consumer confidence would suddenly revive the minute the Tories won the election. No such thing happened, of course. However, that point was trotted out. Interestingly, we are told that

"Weaker energy output caused by maintenance work in the North Sea"

is apparently a cause of the failure of the recovery to come on tap. The third reason, which is the most unusual of them all, is the "unseasonally good weather."

Apparently, according to the *Evening Standard* and the spin doctors at the Treasury, some of whom may be writhing as I speak, the "unseasonally good weather" has a hand in the poor performance in the first quarter. We need to explore how the "unseasonally good weather" acounts for that poor performance and, more important and more interesting, what the Government will do about it.

We have a hint from the Government's performance this afternoon. We have heard the rain-dancers of the Conservative party at work. I use the term "rain-dancers" advisedly. We have seen a variety of ritual movements and ritual incantations of the same old nostrums that those of us who have had to listen to them have heard year in and year out—the same old nostrums of Conservative market philosophy that have proved to be absolutely redundant and incapable of promoting the recovery that we seek. We have brought forward the amendment in the hope that the rain-dancers will recognise that, if they continue those incantations, vapid and vacuous movements and statements, they cannot hope to be the flower in the desert that they themselves have created.

The case for capital allowances is unanswerable, and the Government have not answered it. It is built on a desire to begin to counteract the devastation that has occurred in the manufacturing sector. We take no comfort from any notion that, somehow, the development of the financial services industry is not to be welcomed—we welcome it. If we are creating a strong economy, we need a balance between financial services and manufacturing. But, as was pointed out in the debate, not least by my hon. Friends the Members for Kingswood and for Lewisham, West, if one neglects manufacturing and believes simply that financial services alone can form the basis of a sound economy, one lives in cloud cuckoo land.

Since the news was put out that the plug was to be pulled on Olympia and York at Canary Wharf, GEC has announced a cut of more than 800 jobs in Chelmsford in Essex on top of the 5,000 jobs lost in the company last year. The Commercial Vehicle company has announced that it is to go into receivership. Harking back again to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood, British Aerospace has lost up to 640 jobs. Belling has gone into receivership, with the loss of 850 jobs in Enfield and a further 200 jobs in Burnley in Lancashire.

7 pm

In this afternoon's debate we have heard speeches from those who have been engaged in promoting business in north Tyneside. They are not engaged in an academic exercise but are encouraging the development of business there. We heard from those involved in promoting co-operative industry in the midlands. Again, that is not abstract or esoteric; it is the practical experience of those men and women who are involved in building a strong manufacturing economy.

We stand four square alongside those men and women and with the tide of history that says that manufacturing is important, that there is something important about the rhythm of creating, manufacturing and producing goods. We make no apology for that. The bell tolls for those on the Conservative Benches who constantly seek to undermine the strength of our manufacturing industry. Our amendment will carry the day. It holds the best hope for the future of our economy and I commend it to the Committee.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 231, Noes 329.

Division No. 28] **[7.2 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nicholas
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, James
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, William
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Michael
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David

Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Ms Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Khabra, Piara
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert N. Wareing and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*

Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Beith: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 12, line 47, at end add

'and shall have effect as if there had been added to section 25(1)(b) of the Capital Allowances Act 1990 after "thereto" the words

"The balance so arrived at shall be up-rated by the rate of inflation for the chargeable period, as given by the gross domestic product deflator, in respect of any chargeable period beginning on or after 1st April 1992".'.

I shall be brief, because I do not share the ambition of the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) to fight the Bill line by line, tooth and nail. It does not justify that, and the hon. Gentleman will have some difficulty identifying more than half-a-dozen clauses to which anyone could take strong exception. It is just not that kind of Bill. Other legislation might justify that sort of treatment, but not this.

The amendment suggests a sensible way of changing corporation tax arrangements to protect companies from inflation adding to their corporation tax burden. Providing a long-term, stable corporation tax framework is more likely to provide the climate for investment than one-off incentives designed to promote manufacturing investment in a particular year. I hope that the Government share our objective, even if they feel unable to agree to the amendment.

The present tax system—certainly corporation tax—is distorted by inflation. When the Government's inflation policy goes wrong, business is hit not only by higher prices and higher interest rates but by a higher real corporation tax burden. That distortion can itself lead to lower investment.

The most pernicious aspect relates to investment allowances. Companies can only write down a machine's historic cost, not its current cost, which creates a disincentive to invest. Removing that distortion would be a simple and sound long-term reform of greater value than one-year investment of the kind that the Committee has rightly just voted against, by a substantial majority.

With the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his place, the Financial Secretary might feel obliged to argue that there will not be any inflation, because the Government will remove that scourge from the economy. Even the Chancellor has taken to talking about not the zero inflation rate which the Prime Minister repeatedly mentioned, but a target of 2 per cent. Some have even criticised him for setting so ambitious a target, with the downside that it has in terms of some of the more uncomfortable disciplines associated with it. I share his desire to set a firm target, and would be inclined to go for the zero target rather than for 2 per cent.

Industry has been down this road before when it was told that it could make reforms because there would be no inflation. Nigel Lawson thought and said that in 1984, but inflation took off after reforms led to the removal of the stock allowances. Business was penalised twice as a consequence of inflation.

It would be more sensible to introduce this reform when inflation is low because that would reduce its cost. Its introduction now would also show that the Government are determined to keep inflation low. If inflation rose, the cost of that reform would increase. It therefore makes a great deal of sense to make the change now.

The corporation tax system is vulnerable to distortion in other ways because there is no stock relief, and because nominal rather than real interest rates are deductible. We

simply propose one change in the way in which inflation is accounted for in that system. It is a modest change, which would provide more stability for business and encourage more investment decisions to be made on the right grounds rather than because they would incur one-year tax relief. Those decisions would be made because they represented good economic, business sense. I commend the amendment to the Committee.

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) described the amendment as a modest measure and that is a fair description. I shall make a brief reply, and I am afraid that I shall not suggest to the House that we accept the amendment.

The amendment would adjust capital allowances to allow for inflation, presumably on the ground that the current write-down allowance for tax understates the true cost of using the asset. That is not true because, as I quoted earlier, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said in the Budget statement:

"on average, the current tax rules allow capital investment to be written off more quickly than economic depreciation would imply".—[*Official Report*, 10 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 750.]

The 25 per cent. write-off allowance already allows for inflation, plus a bit more. The hon. Gentleman's assumption is wrong.

There is another reason why this would not be a desirable amendment. I refer to the hon. Gentleman's confidence, or lack of it, that inflation will be brought under control. I am not sensitive about it and I simply remind him that our monetary policy is now set in the context for which the Liberal party argued for many years on the ground that it would be a more successful counter-inflation policy. The pound is in the exchange rate mechanism and we share the hon. Gentleman's confidence that his policy will deliver low inflation. The amendment will, therefore, be unnecessary.

Mr. Beith: I am unconvinced and I believe that if the Government anticipate a successful anti-inflation policy, they should recognise the reasonable cost of the amendment. Business is dissatisfied with the extent of the write-down allowances and it does not feel that the present system adequately allows for inflation. I therefore invite the Committee to make a sensible change to the corporation tax system.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 125, Noes 291.

Division No. 29] **[7.23 pm**

AYES

Ainger, Nicholas
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Betts, Clive
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Chisholm, Malcolm
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Enright, Derek
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Harvey, Nick
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Ms Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Khabra, Piara
Kirkwood, Archy
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pickthall, Colin
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Radice, Giles
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Salmond, Alex
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Trimble, David
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wright, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. A. J. Beith and
Mr. Paul Tyler.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*

Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tim Wood and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 19 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Bill (Clauses 19 and 20), reported without amendment; to lie upon the Table.

Northern Ireland (Prevention of Terrorism)

7.36 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I beg to move,

That the draft Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 19th May, be approved.

The order will renew the emergency powers and provisions currently operating in Northern Ireland. The debate also gives us the opportunity to review the operation of a number of new provisions contained in the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991, the benefits of which are already beginning to be seen. First, I shall speak briefly about the need for the provisions.

We have available yet again the invaluable help of Lord Colville's review. As always, Lord Colville has thought deeply about the nature of the emergency powers and has consulted widely about their operation. He has suggested this year a number of significant and specific improvements, some of which I will mention later. I very much welcome, however, his central conclusion that:

"The new Act, and new arrangements in it, seem to have been introduced and have since been operated without any appreciable adverse reaction."

He does not recommend the suspension of any of its provisions.

It is entirely right that Parliament should take this annual opportunity to see whether the emergency powers and provisions continue to be needed. Determined as we are to bring about the elimination of terrorism, the Government aim by co-ordinated policies to eliminate the need for these measures. For the present, however, it is my duty to report to the House that, regrettably, they remain essential and that we intend that they continue to be used, certainly with sensitivity, but with unremitting resolution.

During the past 12 months the campaign of violence by terrorists from both sides of the community has continued with all its malignity and futility. Since July, 101 people have died and many more have been injured. Homes and livelihoods have been destroyed by bombs and incendiaries recklessly strewn in the midst of human beings or in the premises of businesses which provide employment and prosperity. I will give examples from the past six months alone. A young mother was gunned down in a chemist's shop. A 17-year-old boy was murdered while working in his father's shop. A young policewoman on patrol was killed and a male colleague hideously injured by a horizontal mortar fired at their passing vehicle. A pensioner sitting in a bar was murdered entirely at random. Eight workmen returning from their lawful employment were murdered by the detonation of a mine. Five customers in a betting shop were murdered by a machine gunner.

The terrorists, on whatever side, claim to present themselves as soldiers fighting honourably. Some soldiers —and some honour—when they defile their very humanity like this. They have no mandate for what they do. They are bereft of any justification and they have no chance of success—hence their futility, for neither the people of Northern Ireland, nor their Government, nor the Irish Government, will yield to their attacks. I think that this is dawning on them, and I intend to reinforce the message.

The toll exacted would have been far worse were it not for the shrewd and courageous operations of the security forces. The terrorists have been forced to abort many of their intended operations by reason of most valuable intelligence and resulting interdiction. Substantial finds of arms and munitions and numerous arrests have been made. In 1991, 391 people were charged with terrorist-type offences, including 120 with murder or attempted murder. For the first four months of this year, the figures were 140 and 44 respectively.

It is thanks to the brave men and women of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the armed forces, and the determined and professional leadership under which they operate, that the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland conduct their daily lives in safety and normality. Measures continue to be taken which will further improve the effectiveness of the security forces' operations. Most importantly, last week a second deputy chief constable was appointed. Following a review of the senior command structure of the RUC, he will be responsible for all operational police work, including the gathering of counter-terrorist intelligence and its prompt employment by both the RUC and the Army.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Will the new assistant chief constable have direction also of Army intelligence gathering, and will the Army report directly to him?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: It is a deputy chief constable, not an assistant chief constable. He will have overall operational control under the chief constable. The primacy of the police being in place, and continuing to be in place, the Army's operations are ultimately under his direction. That is as much so in intelligence as in other operational areas.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I recognise that the fight against terrorism must always be within the rule of law and that anything else—any murky business that has come to light, or allegations of it—only helps the terrorists. That is my view. Does the Secretary of State agree that when it comes to a mandate, which he mentioned, there seems not to be one for the Provisional IRA? We know that the Provisional Sinn Fein lost a seat in the general election, and all the evidence suggests that there is no majority within the minority community when it comes to voting for terrorism. The Provisional IRA always claims that it speaks for the Irish people as a whole, but when it last contested elections in the Irish Republic it obtained less than 2 per cent. of the vote. Is it not important for these people to recognise that after 22 years of terrifying crimes—the Secretary of State has referred to some of the crimes committed by terrorists in the past six months—in Northern Ireland and on the mainland, they have not achieved anything? Would it not be wise for the terrorists to recognise that the objectives that they have set themselves have not been achieved, or anything like it?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I agree with every word that the hon. Gentleman has said.

I think that it would be helpful if I summarised, albeit briefly, the principal provisions that we propose shall be renewed in a few days' time if the order is accepted. The Act provides the legal basis for the trial of terrorist-type cases by a single judge—the so-called Diplock courts. It contains special rules on the admissibility of confessions in

[Sir Patrick Mayhew]

scheduled cases. It provides for the discretionary proscription of terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland. It provides the security forces with powers to stop and question, arrest, search and seize. It contains statutory rights for persons arrested to have a person informed of their arrest and whereabouts, and to have access to legal advice, and it regulates the private security guard industry in Northern Ireland.

Last year's Act strengthened the law in several respects. These include new offences of possessing items intended for terrorist purposes, of directing terrorist organisations and of constructing bypasses around border crossing points which have been closed by the security forces. It created new powers for the security forces to examine documents and other recorded data found during searches, to seize equipment used to reopen closed border crossings, and to employ civilian specialists in conducting searches and in investigating terrorist finances.

Last year's Act also introduced new safeguards in the exercise of the emergency powers. These include allowing the security forces to stop and question people about their identity and movement only for so long as is necessary, and requiring particulars of searches of premises, dwelling houses and, in some instances, vehicles to be recorded in writing. The Act requires me to produce codes of practice covering the detention, treatment, questioning and identification of terrorist suspects in police custody and to use the new powers to investigate terrorist finances, about which I shall say more in a moment. It contains provisions for the appointment of an independent assessor of military complaints procedures.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I apologise for not being in my place at the beginning of my right hon. and learned Friend's speech. Does he intend to introduce videotape recordings of interviews with suspects in Northern Ireland? As he well knows, having had great responsibility for the matter on the mainland when he was Attorney-General, we are moving towards the practice here as a safeguard against any sort of miscarriage of justice which might result from interrogations. I understand that there is a move towards having the practice adopted for terrorist offences on the mainland. If it is to be the practice on the mainland, as a matter of logic it should be adopted in Northern Ireland. I shall be grateful for any indication that my right hon. and learned Friend can give of his thinking on the matter.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: My hon. and learned Friend asks an important question about a topic to which, naturally enough, I shall be coming in a few moments when I refer to the holding centres. I have no responsibility for what happens on the mainland, but I have responsibility for what happens in Northern Ireland. Perhaps my hon. and learned Friend will allow me to come to the point specifically in a few moments.

First, I shall deal with the terrorists' finances. Lord Colville notes that the new provisions in the Act relating to terrorist finances are very significant. There can be no doubt of the great importance of action disrupting the ability of terrorists and terrorist organisations to finance themselves and interrupting the flow of funds to them. As the Chief Constable has reminded us, in recent years more than 300 people have been convicted of involvement in illegal funding operations, which were probably worth about £45 million. More recently, terrorists have been engaging in much more elaborate methods of fund raising and of concealing their funds. It was to counter that trend that the special powers of investigation set out in section 57 and schedule 5 were enacted.

I am glad to be able to tell the House that all those provisions are now in force, and the signs are that they will prove extremely useful. They have already underpinned the provisions that were first to be introduced. A recent and major operation was conducted by the security forces called operation Cristo with the full support and co-operation of their counterparts in the Republic. The preparation of the draft code of practice for the conduct of investigations into terrorist finances is nearly finished. When that is completed, it will be circulated for comment before being laid before Parliament.

With regard to the holding centres, it is necessary, as in Great Britain, so in Northern Ireland, that the police should have appropriate powers to detain for questioning people whom they suspect of terrorist offences. Those powers must be subject to safeguards but, as Lord Colville mildly points out, the bringing of the guilty to justice is as much a feature of a proper criminal justice system as is the protection of the innocent from wrongful conviction.

It is essential, however, that allegations of ill-treatment of persons in police custody be dealt with in a way which secures the confidence of the public. The maintenance of the rule of law requires compliance from the police as much as from everyone else. Physical assault is a criminal offence, and abuse of persons in custody is strictly forbidden.

The review discusses in some detail the circumstances in which such allegations arise. Some, as Lord Colville points out, undoubtedly arise for the purpose of undermining public confidence in the police. But whenever a complaint is made against the police it is, as it must be, thoroughly investigated. The evidence is sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland who decides, in accordance with his normal criteria, whether any prosecution should be instigated or whether further inquiries are necessary.

Very properly, a wide range of statutory and administrative safeguards for those in police custody exists. For example, an extension of detention requires the Secretary of State's authority. The suspect has a right to have a member of his family or a friend informed of his arrest and whereabouts, and a right to consult a solicitor privately. All interviews are monitored by close-circuit television. They are monitored for the purpose of seeing that nothing is going wrong, but not recorded.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) utters thoughts which, I recognise, are quite widely shared, and they have been considered by the Government in the past. Lord Colville in his report records that the Government have firmly rejected the suggestion that in the interrogation of terrorist-type suspects a television record should be kept. That has been the view of the Chief Constable and it remains his view, and I believe that, having regard to the special circumstances in Northern Ireland, for which I alone am responsible, and the problems of investigating terrorist offences, the arguments against the suggestion outweigh the persuasive arguments which can be put forward in favour of it.

Detailed custody records are maintained in writing. There is a right to regular medical examinations and to a

continuous period of at least eight hours rest in any period of 24 hours free from questioning, travel or interruption. A further reinforcement of those safeguards will be provided by the forthcoming codes of practice that I have mentioned.

Mr. McNamara: It would be helpful if the Secretary of State could inform the House how much has been spent in out-of-court settlements arising from allegations of ill-treatment in holding centres and how it is that such money has been spent although there is not one recorded occasion of any person monitoring an interrogation considering it necessary to stop that interrogation. That contradiction needs some explanation.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Such matters are not so simple as they sometimes seem. I do not have at my fingertips the figure for compensation awarded as a result of claims brought in that context in recent years, but perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister of State will be able to provide it when he replies. However, it is not easy for such a claim to be defended. It is by no means uncommon for those representing a claimant who has begun civil proceedings to refuse to co-operate with the police. That means that it is difficult for the allegations to be investigated, which has a bearing upon the ultimate decision as to whether an agreed disposal is to be made. It certainly has a bearing upon the disparity between the number of cases which are settled in that context and those which lead to disciplinary or even criminal investigation.

I was referring to the forthcoming codes of practice governing the detention, treatment, questioning and identification of persons detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Before going any further, I should complete that point by saying that we all know there are considerable constraints on disciplinary, let alone criminal, proceedings when a long time has elapsed. If a long time has elapsed, taken up by the progress of a civil claim, that has a bearing on the ability to bring disciplinary proceedings even in a case where, on legal advice, a settlement has been arranged.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the recording and retention of a tape, even for six months or a year, would prevent a claim from being made in the first place by a suspect who alleges maltreatment?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Of course I agree with that, but other considerations have to be taken into account, not least among which is the effect that the knowledge that a televised recording is being made of the interview might have, and foreseeably would have, upon someone who in other circumstances might be prepared to speak, knowing that he would have no control over what happened to that tape recording.

I have decided that an independent commissioner for the holding centres of Castlereagh and elsewhere shall be appointed. His duty will be to visit the centres on a random basis so that Ministers and the general public may be assured that the safeguards and procedures to protect the interests of persons detained are being fully implemented.

The lay visiting scheme introduced by the police authority has undoubtedly been a success and the commissioner scheme will draw heavily on that experience. I shall be consulting the Chief Constable and the police authority on how the arrangements for the commissioner scheme should be carried forward and I shall make a further announcement soon.

The reliability of statistics is obviously an important factor in securing public confidence that all is well. Lord Colville has shown that there is substantial room for improvement here and that is being taken in hand. We are examining his other proposals closely. For every reason it is desirable for us to take all practicable steps, as he recommends, to secure comprehensive, contemporary records of what happens when someone is detained in custody, and that we propose to do.

I come now to how we should handle questions of police and Army conduct. I know that we all agree that the conduct of individual police officers and soldiers is central to their operational effectiveness. Any security force activities which break the law, or otherwise fall short of the professional standards required, will not be met with a blind eye. They will be impartially investigated, as is happening in connection with events at Coalisland, East Tyrone, at present. Where the necessary evidence exists, it will be reported to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.

Those are precisely the standards that the security forces set themselves, which their arduous training inculcates and which all units—I emphasise all units—strive to maintain. I ask the House and those outside to remember that there is constant interaction between the security forces and the public, the vast majority of it friendly and with no hint of friction.

However, complaints, sometimes entirely justified, are made and the timely processing of complaints is an important part of the maintenance of good relations with the community. Lord Colville mentions that the Army is now setting itself targets for the speedy resolution of formal complaints made to it. That is part of the process that I am describing, and I intend shortly to announce the appointment of an independent assessor of military complaints procedures under the power contained in the Act.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): Will those powers allow the investigation of a complaint from any member of the public—or from the House—about the activities, behaviour and standards of very senior officers who may still be involved in army intelligence, specifically in the force reconnaissance unit, or will they simply apply to the squaddie on the street?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The terms of assessment for the independent assessor of military complaints procedures will have to be worked out. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, however, and I think that he can take comfort from the fact that there is no doubt in the minds of the Army authorities, the police authorities or the Government that the rule of law must be maintained. If criminal allegations are made, they will be investigated. If complaints are made about the conduct of soldiers they, too, will be investigated within this procedure. I cannot tell the House the terms of reference, but it will be up to the authorities I have mentioned to decide whether, ultimately, the hon. Gentleman's question is answered in the affirmative.

Mr. Mallon: Will the Secretary of State reinforce the view expressed by his predecessor, the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke),

[Mr. Mallon]

in an earlier debate? The right hon. Gentleman said then that no member of the security forces, however junior or senior, would be allowed to act in a way that was not compatible with the law. Will the Secretary of State put it on record again that no member of the security forces or of the general public in the north of Ireland will be allowed to act above and beyond the normal law?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the answer to both questions is yes, without qualification.

Border crossings are also discussed in the review. Lord Colville bestows deserved praise on the security forces for their efforts to deal sensitively and quickly with the community issues that are bound to arise from the need to resite and modernise permanent vehicle checkpoints. He gives a number of examples of the use of the powers conferred by the Act in border areas, which illustrate their importance.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State will have more to say about that when he winds up the debate, but let me say now that the efforts of the Garda and the Irish army in the fight against terrorism also deserve praise. Their diligence and professionalism have already led to a series of major arms finds and arrests this year. That includes the discovery of more than 1,500 kg of home-made explosive in Donegal, a[illegible]rifles, two machine guns and 20,000 rounds of ammunition in Cork.

Mr. Flynn, the Irish justice Minister, has said that those discoveries have almost certainly saved lives, and I readily endorse that. The Irish Government share our determination that terrorism should not prevail, and we work closely with them to ensure that co-operation on the ground is close. Much has been achieved, but much undoubtedly remains to be done to ensure that terrorists—whether in the north or in the south—cannot escape justice.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Why do we continually hear reports on the radio that groups of people have met at the border, and that border crossings closed by the Army have been reopened? Neither the Garda nor the Royal Ulster Constabulary seem to be taking any action to deal with people who are deliberately breaking the law.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I recognise the basic desire of people in the neighbourhood to be able to cross the border. North of the border, however, there are criminal sanctions against the reopening of crossings which have been lawfully closed by the security forces, while south of the border such powers do not exist. We are discussing the matter with our counterparts in the Irish Government and, as with other issues, we hope to achieve much more by way of co-operation in our effort to ensure that terrorists from both sides of the border do not escape justice.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am watching the clock, and I know that many other hon. Members wish to speak. I will give way for the last time.

Mr. Colvin: The question of frontier controls is very important. It has been suggested that frontier controls between member states will be unlawful in the EEC. If, for instance, the European Court ruled against such controls and they are therefore bound to be removed, could that not lead to the introduction of the carrying of identity cards within the Province? Might not that help the security forces rather than hindering them?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: There is nothing to prevent member states from maintaining security controls. My hon. Friend knows very well the difference of opinion between the British Government and others about the effect of treaty legislation in that context.

Time spent on remand in custody is probably the last topic in Lord Colville's report with which I shall deal. It is an important subject. Lord Colville refers to the recommendation, in his report on Belfast prison, about the need to reduce the time that prisoners spend on remand in custody in Northern Ireland. My predecessor accepted that the case for cutting such remand times was "unanswerable". I agree, and the agencies involved in the prosecution process share my anxiety.

We have accordingly decided to introduce a special scheme in Northern Ireland, aimed at reducing and monitoring the time defendants spend in custody before they are tried on indictment for scheduled offences. The scheme will start on 1 July. It will impose administrative targets for scheduled custody cases, which present the most serious delays. The targets set will be to take such cases from first remand to committal stage in 38 weeks; and from committal to arraignment, when the defendant enters his or her plea, in 14 weeks—a period of 12 months overall from first remand to arraignment.

Those targets are challenging, and will require a significant improvement in the processing of such cases in Northern Ireland. They can be achieved only through the agencies' having agreed—as they have—to introduce new arrangements to monitor closely the progress of the cases involved, and to introduce new reporting arrangements for cases which are in danger of overrunning.

I should have preferred to introduce even tighter time limits straight away. I have had to conclude that that is not a reasonable realistic expectation for the time being, but I emphasise that I wish to see further reductions in remand periods over and above those being introduced in the next few weeks. I have naturally considered whether to introduce a statutory scheme, but I have had to reject that option because I cannot at present be satisfied that it could operate without a real risk of dangerous people being released.

I believe that the measures that I have outlined today will lead to a significant and welcome improvement in the time scheduled remand prisoners spend in custody and will lay the necessary foundations for sustained and continued improvements for the future. They are designed to ensure that Lord Colville's wish to reduce remand times is given substance, and will start to be realised.

I know that the whole House will wish to express our deep gratitude and admiration to the security forces, and the prison service, for their dedicated and frequently dangerous work. We ask so much of them, and I believe that we get it in a measure that no other country could begin to approach. The Government are determined that the necessary resources, in terms both of manpower and equipment and of an appropriate framework of law, shall be in place to enable them to carry out their duties successfully.

Finally, I pay particular tribute to the long-suffering people of Northern Ireland who endure bravely, with

resolution and resilience, an ordeal which has gone on for more than 20 years. Given the subject matter of today's debate, it is inevitable that our focus should principally be on security matters, but that is only one element of our policy on Northern Ireland. Social and economic programmes and the pursuit of constitutional, political progress are fundamental to a just and tranquil future for the people of Northern Ireland. Those policies affect far more people directly than those who will ever encounter personally the emergency legislation that we are discussing.

It is my most earnest desire, and that of the Government, to help the people of the Province to secure such a future. Meanwhile, we shall continue to confront terrorism with unremitting resolution, by the careful deployment of all the formidable measures and means made lawful by the legislation which is justly provided for that purpose. I commend the order to the House.

8.10 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): These renewal debates have become a traditional occasion for the House to reflect on security developments, to listen, as we have with interest, to the fresh developments that the Secretary of State outlines and to consider the general security position. I wish only that the paramilitaries of all persuasions would occasionally stop and reflect on the lives that they take, that they wreck and that they lay down themselves. Perhaps they might then realise the awful waste, hurt and despair that they create.

Although I am not so convinced about the commitment of some Conservative Members to civil liberties that I can argue that the legislation would no longer exist in the absence of terrorism, it must be clear that there would be no pretext or justification for the order if the paramilitaries stopped the killing.

We recognise that some emergency legislation may be necessary, but we cannot support the order. Our reasons have been well rehearsed, particularly in debates on the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991. As long as the power of internment remains in the legislation, even if it has not been activated, it is unacceptable to Labour Members. It is a constant reminder of the unacceptable face of the state and an admission of political failure.

Like the Secretary of State, I should like to express, on behalf of the Opposition, our admiration for the courage and resourcefulness of members of the RUC, the Army and the prison service. We ask them to do a difficult job and, by and large, they do it professionally and effectively.

The Opposition fully support the police and the Army in their efforts impartially to uphold the rule of law. That is why we view with concern any departures from the high standards that are set by the vast majority of police officers and soldiers. Any such departures damage public confidence in the administration of justice and make life more difficult and dangerous for the security forces.

I should like to quote Sir John Hermon:

"This is not some simplistic war being fought, this is a complicated political, social and community problem which requires handling with the utmost sensitivity and understanding."

The Opposition therefore view with deep concern the allegations about the ill-treatment of detainees at the Castlereagh holding centre. For the first time, Amnesty International has issued an urgent action alert in connection with incidents within the United Kingdom and associated with Castlereagh.

In many cases, detainees have subsequently received compensation as a result of their detention and their treatment while in custody. I regret to say that I find the sections of Lord Colville's report on this issue far from convincing. If there is any evidence that moneys paid in compensation end up in the coffers of terrorist organisations, one would expect criminal charges to ensue, for that would be a criminal offence. There has been no sign of that, no evidence and no cases brought.

Mr. Mallon: Does the hon. Member agree with Lord Colville's comment in the report that the people of Northern Ireland are "highly litigious by nature"?

Mr. McNamara: It is always dangerous to make sweeping comments about any particular nation or people. I prefer to judge people on their individual merits.

Mr. Mallon: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that such a comment, in what is supposed to be an impartial assessment of legislation, is advisable?

Mr. McNamara: I regard it as an undesirable statement to make about any group. I believe that one should deal with people as individuals. To make sweeping generalisations without taking into consideration the circumstances in which the litigation arises is, I think, not the wisest course to take. I was surprised to read what the noble Viscount said.

Until such time as adequate and credible safeguards are put in place at Castlereagh, those allegations will continue to gain credence. The damage that such incidents do to confidence in the security forces should be well known by now. Neither they nor police officers will be safe from false accusations until safeguards are established.

A number of options have been advanced to provide conditions in which the RUC can conduct its investigations in a correct and effective manner. It cannot help the pursuit of justice if the police are not seen to be above suspicion.

I deal now with the point that was made earlier by the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence). Perhaps the most satisfactory safeguard would be video-recording suspects' interviews. This has been a long-running controversy, and the arguments on all sides are well known. I regret that Lord Colville seems to have given up hope on the suggestion. His previous report contained the most persuasive case and arguments in its favour—far more persuasive than the present report.

We hope that the Government and the Chief Constable will finally see sense on this issue. Television recordings can protect the identity of the interrogating officer—the techniques are simple—and can prevent accusations about a blow being struck. It is possible to tape-record interrogations in such a way that an application could be made to a judge in chambers if it were felt that the transcript of sensitive intelligence material was likely to fall into the wrong hands, provided that it was not dependent on the bringing of the case. The Minister of State shakes his head in disagreement. If he would like to say why, I should be happy to give way. He does not take the point.

In paragraph 6.5 of his report Lord Colville quotes from a letter that we should seriously consider. It says:

"The damage to the reputation of the RUC and the United Kingdom as a whole which results from the continuing

[Mr. McNamara]

publicity, if not credibility, given to these allegations far outweighs any marginal advantage which may account to the security forces from the absolute privacy surrounding the interrogation process."

It is worth repeating that

"the continuing publicity . . . given to these allegations far outweighs any marginal advantage".

I would have hoped that, with the arrival of a new Secretary of State, there would be greater appreciation of the need for that safeguard to be introduced, especially if it is to be introduced on this side of the water and if it is also to be used in terrorist-related offences on this side of the water.

There are other forms of safeguards that could be employed more efficiently, some of which the Secretary of State outlined. One is ensuring that detainees have a genuine right to legal advice, a right that is severely qualified at present by time and other matters to which the Secretary of State referred. It would be helpful if he could explain the stark contrast between the practice in Northern Ireland and that on this island. In Britain, detainees under the PTA have legal representation as a matter of course, and the fact of detention is usually broadcast all over the place by the police. In Northern Ireland, suspected terrorists are routinely denied access to legal advice and held incommunicado. Why the difference?

I regret to say that the arguments used in defence of the status quo are unworthy of those who advance them. Essentially, it boils down to a suggestion that the legal profession is not to be trusted. If true, it would be an appalling indictment of the condition of Northern Ireland society. Allegations about and insinuations against members of the legal profession are not only disgraceful but dangerous, as the murder of Mr. Finucane showed.

Even in a recent book called "Big Boys' Rule" by Mark Urban, the degree to which the slur on the legal profession is maintained is clear. Accepting it as gospel and producing no evidence at all, he states:

"There is undoubtedly a community of republican lawyers, supported financially by the movement, which is prepared to act in ways which might be considered unusual in Britain. For example, the lawyer may agree to pass a message from a terrorist to his commander, or might use cross-examination of a security force witness in an attempt to probe whether an operation had resulted from a leak within the IRA."

Despite such insidious suggestions, no member of the legal profession has ever been prosecuted for abusing his or her status as an officer of the court on behalf of terrorist organisations or individual terrorists; nor have any complaints been made to the appropriate disciplinary bodies. I am sure that the Secretary of State, as a former Law Officer, should have a particular interest in defending the right of defence and ensuring that there is full appreciation of the fact that lawyers acting for the defence are as important for the rule of law as judges and prosecutors.

The Secretary of State announced in skeleton form his suggestions for an independent visitor or commissioner to attend the holding centres. He did not say why he could not accept immediately the recommendation of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland that ordinary lay visitors should attend the centres. He did not say to whom the new commissioner will be answerable; nor has he given any details of the commissioner's precise powers or the statutory basis of those powers. It would be far better if the authority's proposals for lay visitors had been accepted, but we shall consider with interest what has been suggested.

It is also interesting that the Secretary of State announced that the gentleman or lady who is to examine procedures in the Army is to deal with complaints. The fact must be taken on board that it is a power not to examine the substance of complaints but only to examine the procedures for dealing with complaints. That is a very different matter.

A number of recent developments have cast some doubt on the policy of police primacy. We believe that, although there are obvious difficulties, the principle that the police should be responsible for law and order is vital if there is ever to be normal society in Northern Ireland. Any deviation from police primacy is a setback for such hopes. Recent incidents such as those in Coalisland are under investigation by the RUC, so any detailed comment would be inappropriate. However, many people would like an answer to the question, "Who is in control?" The Secretary of State tried to answer that question and said that the control rests purely with the police. It must be said that recent experiences and experiences of what is happening now tend to suggest that on occasions the police are not and have not been fully in control.

Can the Secretary of State therefore assure us that he is satisfied with the preparation now being given to military units before they come to take up service in Northern Ireland and that there is adequate supervision of the military by the police? No one should seek to underestimate the difficulties and frustrations experienced by young soldiers who live with the constant risk of death or injury and fear of ambush, but it is precisely discipline and respect for the law that distinguish the legitimate armed forces from their terrorist opponents. That is something on which we all agree and must insist.

As the role of the Army is to assist the civil power, can the Secretary of State give a further assurance that the RUC has control over the deployment of the military forces and that the requirements of the police take precedence over military rivalries? There has been a recent case in which military disrespect for the authority of the RUC reached frightening proportions—I refer to the case of Mr. Brian Nelson. If the allegations in Monday night's "Panorama" programme are accurate, there is great cause for concern about the operations of the security forces in Northern Ireland.

The Nelson case raises serious questions. These are not matters that can be swept under the carpet—they go to the heart of the issue. Is Britain serious about upholding law and order and establishing a society in which all sections of the community will be fairly treated, or is Northern Ireland an adventure playground for secret agents? I hope and believe that the former is true. If not, we will have dealt a massive blow to all the efforts of those working for peace and justice, especially the thousands of police officers and soldiers who go about their difficult jobs with dedication and integrity. However, if the Secretary of State wants to convince us that all sections of the security forces operate within the law, some explaining still needs to be done.

We know that Mr. Nelson violated the law but, as he was an agent of the force reconnaissance unit, it is difficult to understand why his criminal activities developed to such an extent and why he alone was subject to prosecution.

Surely some of his handlers were accessories before, and certainly after, the fact of some very evil deeds, but they allowed him to continue.

We presume that a review of the relations between the various intelligence gathering agencies has taken place since the arrest of Mr. Nelson. Indeed, the announcement of the appointment with which the Secretary of State began his speech is proof of that, but can we now assume that the RUC's special branch has the full co-operation of military intelligence, that police primacy in intelligence is a reality and that no agents will be run by any bodies without the knowledge of the police?

Sir Patrick Mayhew *indicated assent.*

Mr. McNamara: The Secretary of State nods his head in agreement, and that is welcome.

The Nelson case also demonstrated the importance of guidelines for the use of agents. Colonel J, the commander of the FRU at the time, argued that the Home Office guidelines were inapplicable in Northern Ireland. Is that true? If so, have new, specific guidelines for Northern Ireland been introduced to prevent agents indulging in the kind of mayhem perpetrated by Mr. Nelson and his miscellaneous colleagues? Do Home Office guidelines rule in Northern Ireland or are there different guidelines?

I seems clear that the Nelson operation yielded next to nothing to the RUC. Do the Secretary of State and the Government stand behind the claim that Mr. Nelson saved more lives than he destroyed? The House would also be interested to hear what arrangements have been made to prevent the recurrence of such an extraordinary case.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): The hon. Gentleman refers to those incidences on the basis of media reports. I wish to point out the dangers of doing so. A programme broadcast some time ago entitled "Death on the Rock" was acclaimed by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts and won an award. But that programme was based on very unreliable witnesses. Bearing in mind the media content of the hon. Gentleman's speech, will he join me in asking the recipient of the award, who obviously did not do his research, to return that award?

Mr. McNamara: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's interjection in the debate. First, the killing of three unarmed people when no bomb was in evidence and for an event that was supposed to take place in three days' time, with evidence given by people behind screens, makes me extremely worried about the handling of such matters by the security forces in this country and Gibraltar. Secondly, the transcript of much of Mr. Nelson's trial revealed many of the facts that I have stated. Thirdly, I am aware of no action that has been taken against the producers of that programme, nor of any comment by Government sources that it was inaccurate in any detail.

"Panorama" also made specific accusations that are so appalling that the truth must be established as quickly as possible and remedial action taken if necessary. Did the FRU help Mr. Nelson to turn the chaotic files of the UDA into effective intelligence? Did Mr. Nelson give five warnings prior to the murder of Terence McDaid? If so, why were they ignored?

Will the Minister of State explain when he winds up why the FRU attempted to conceal evidence from Mr. Stevens, a senior police officer appointed by the Chief Constable of the RUC? What action was taken against those responsible? Why were they not proceeded against for seeking to pervert the course of justice?

By now, the South African connection with loyalist terrorists is beyond doubt. I cannot understand why the representatives of a state that colludes with terrorists to kill inhabitants of Northern Ireland are still permitted to fly their flag in Trafalgar square. If "Panorama" is to be believed, matters are much worse than previously suspected. A military intelligence agent appears to have been involved in arms shipments from South Africa, which were allowed to enter Northern Ireland and were later used in at least eight murders at the Milltown cemetery and the bookies on Ormeau road.

I can only conclude that the sooner South Africa has a democratic Government, the better for Northern Ireland. I am particularly concerned that agents who were involved in those terrible mistakes might still be active or involved in the security forces.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I urge the hon. Gentleman to maintain fairness in his comments, because the South African connection clearly runs both ways. As long ago as 1969, and reinforced in 1978 and 1984, the IRA acknowledged its support for and co-operation with the African National Congress.

Mr. McNamara: I have listened to the hon. Gentleman on that subject in the past but have never found that his comments have much substance. May I make one thing clear: we are not swapping tit-for-tat allegations between nasty, mean terrorist organisations, but discussing the role and conduct of the British Army. We condemn the IRA and all the other terrorist organisations out of hand. We are discussing the standards that we expect from our forces.

Mr. Mallon: Is the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) aware that a Sunday newspaper that carried a comment of his has paid substantial damages to a constituent of mine because of exactly the same kind of nonsense that he has spoken today? That is a matter of quantifiable fact.

Mr. McNamara: That "Panorama" programme made a serious allegation against the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King). I hope that he will make a statement at the earliest opportunity to clarify matters. The programme alleged that, when he was at the Ministry of Defence, the right hon. Gentleman or someone acting on his behalf wrote to the Director of Public Prosecutions while he was considering the evidence against Mr. Nelson to say what a valuable agent Mr. Nelson had been to the Army. Is that true?

The Secretary of State is obviously not prepared to reply to my question. It is important because, if it is true, it means that a senior Cabinet Minister, or subordinates acting on his behalf, attempted to lean on the DPP while he was considering whether to bring charges against a man accused of the most terrible terrorist crimes. If it is true, it is another hammer blow to the independence and credibility of the criminal justice system. It means that a senior Minister interfered in the course of justice in a Department to which he is not directly related that was seeking to decide, on the evidence before it, whether charges should be brought.

[Mr. McNamara]

Yesterday, *The Independent* made other allegations from which various inferences can be drawn. It may reflect on the allegation, which the Secretary of State does not seek to contradict, made in "Panorama". It said:

"Early in 1987, Colonel J's superiors came under pressure from Tom King, then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. According to one source: 'King was complaining—"Where are your successes?" The clear message from King was: "You must do better."'

One of the FRU's responses was to seek clearance to insert a new agent into the loyalist paramilitary groups. This was opposed by MI5, which argued that the Special Branch had already penetrated the Protestant paramilitary organisations with its own agents.

The Special Branch was not even informed, but Colonel J, with political backing, was able to overcome MI5's objections and Brian Nelson was recruited."

The effect of Brian Nelson's recruitment, against the advice of MI5 and without special branch being informed—allegedly because of political pressure—resulted in all the evil consequences that we have seen.

I hope that the Government will realise the significance of those matters and will not treat them with their usual complacency. If we want the rule of law to prevail, we must respect it ourselves and we cannot write to the DPP pointing out the value of a particular agent.

There are no short cuts to a solution in Northern Ireland. There may be temptations to cut corners with the rule of law. Indeed, the legislation on which we are voting tonight shows not only what happens when we yield to that temptation but leads us into more temptation. We do not want the Government to lead us into temptation; we want them to work to deliver us from the evil of terrorism. We do not believe that they are doing that adequately and, for that reason, we shall vote against the order.

8.39 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I do not—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. McNamara: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The statement has just been made, which you may have heard, that I did not give the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) notice of my question. I wrote to him today:

"Dear Tom,

Just a brief note to inform you that I shall be referring to the Nelson Case and your part in it in tonight's debate.

Yours, Kevin McNamara."

The note was on the board at 2 pm.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I do not propose to follow the remarks of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). Nobody should be tried in this House on speculation or media presentation. Nor should a Member of this House be entitled to say to another Member, "I give you an opportunity to reply" and take his seat. If the allegations are of such a serious nature—the hon. Gentleman went on for some time—how can proper clearance be made in an intervention? Unfortunately, it seems that in tonight's debate the hon. Gentleman has made a long and serious accusation against the Army and has moved away from the fact that we need to defeat terrorism. That is what is important. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not follow all the ramifications of his speech.

As the first Member from Northern Ireland to be called in this debate, I should like to pay tribute on behalf of the Northern Ireland people to the gallant special constable, Glenn Goodman. I salute his memory tonight, as do all right-thinking Ulster people. I also salute the courage and integrity of his wife. I assure her that what she said tonight is what many widows in Northern Ireland have said. I salute her as a courageous woman who deserves the sympathy of the whole community and our praise.

Yesterday, the chairman of the Royal Ulster Constabulary Police Federation, Mr. Beattie, said:

"If war weariness is affecting the community it is not quite sufficiently evident yet among our politicians. For those of us on the outside of the political talks it seems that progress is extremely disappointing . . .

It will also be much more tragic if we allow the paramilitaries to fill the political void by claiming that their murderous activities reflect the frustration of ordinary people with the political process."

I utterly deplore Mr. Beattie's remarks. Since he was appointed to his office, he has had the habit of making remarks against politicians. Yet when he is challenged he does not name them—he says, "All politicians".

The elected Members of Northern Ireland have had no say whatever in controlling the security strategy of the police, the Army or the Ulster Defence Regiment during the troubles since Stormont was abandoned. We have had no responsibility whatever. Over and over again the elected politicians of Northern Ireland are blamed for failures in a strategy for which they are not responsible. This House took into its control the entire war against the IRA and any other terrorist organisation in Northern Ireland, and it is responsible. Successive Governments, whether Labour or Tory, are responsible—not us. I want to make that perfectly clear tonight.

There is a contradiction between Mr. Beattie's two paragraphs. First, he tells us that he is disappointed, although he is outside the talks, that this war weariness has not caught up with the politicians. I have news for him: the people of Northern Ireland are not war weary and the men whom he pretends to represent are not war weary. I challenge him to hold an opinion poll of the members of the federation and to announce the results publicly. The ordinary man in the street and the policeman who has to carry out his task is not war weary. He does not want the politicians in Northern Ireland to cobble up some miserable betrayal and then pronounce that it is a recipe for peace. Mr. Beattie does not know what is going on behind the doors in Stormont and he will not hear about it from me. Mr. Beattie should mind his own business and not pillory Northern Ireland politicians.

Mr. Beattie then makes the strange statement:

"if we allow the paramilitaries to fill the political void by claiming that their murderous activities reflect the frustrations of ordinary people with the political process."

That statement contradicts his first statement. He wants to blame politicians and then he attacks ordinary people as if they would think it right that paramilitaries should act in that way because they are frustrated. I will leave Mr. Beattie to carry out his opinion poll and I look forward to seeing the result next time he brings out his glossy magazine. Knowing the policemen, their wives and families, as well as the bereaved and the awful suffering that they have endured, I can tell the House that war weariness is not apparent in them or in the ordinary people of Northern Ireland. They will not give in to any plan of surrender or compromise.

Explanations and exercises of so-called understanding terrorism, how it operates and why we must work this way and that way will not defeat terrorism. The men and women of Northern Ireland do not crave for the philosophies of certain politicians and others to explain to them why we have terrorism in the Province. Every day they see the full force and tangible reality of a terrorised existence. They know from desperate experience and personal scarifice that there is terrorism, and they want that terrorism stopped. They look to the Government, who are now responsible for controlling the strategy of the fight against the IRA and other terrorists, to stop this war. No amount of political initiatives or talks will bring the violence to an end. Politicians are not plenipotentiaries for the billigerents. Indeed, the belligerents are not at the talks table and I trust that no Government will ever bring them to that table: they need to be told that they cannot bomb their way to it.

What I see is yet another endeavour to give respectability to the IRA. I do not believe that there is any difference between Sinn Fein and the IRA. One cannot carefully package part of a terrorist organisation, call it by another name, sit down with its representatives and engage in a dialogue with them, claiming that by that means they will be encouraged to persuade the IRA men to leave their weapons and stop their murders. Sinn Fein is part of the IRA, and it has pulled off a great propaganda stunt. Now its members can say, "Oh, but the clergymen accept that we are not the IRA." Today, another effort has been made to give credibility to these murdering thugs and to those who speak for them and justify their diabolical wickedness and are part and parcel of their organisation.

The sooner the Government and the House learn of their awesome responsibility to seek to protect the citizens of Ulster by extinguishing terrorism, the better it will be for everyone. Emergency legislation, military and police manpower, superior fire power and vast amounts of expenditure on security will not in themselves bring an end to terrorism. They are the ingredients, but without the proper strategy they will never bring an end to the conflict.

The Government and the House must have the will to win the war against the IRA republican terrorists, who kill three times as many people as any other organisation in Northern Ireland. What I say about the IRA, I say about other terrorist organisations, some of whose members are referred to in the House as "Protestant" paramilitaries. I never hear IRA men referred to here as "Roman Catholic" IRA men. The House should realise that it is an insult to the Protestant people and the Protestant ethos to say that terrorists are Protestants. Terrorists have rejected the very ethos of Protestantism, which is the belief in civil and religious liberty for all men. All terrorists must be crushed, and we must face up to the IRA now.

Pandering to the political needs of the IRA by permitting members of Sinn Fein to have a role, however minor, in the political institutions of the land legitimises the organisation's message and gives it hope. Its members thrive upon the hope that, some day, they will be at the table. An ecumenical clergyman whom I heard speaking in the general assembly of the Irish Presbyterian Church argued that, even if the four parties at the table in Northern Ireland reached a settlement, the fifth party would still be at loggerheads and the problem would still be with us. Given that sort of thinking, Ulster people must ask themselves what the end will be.

The Government should show their will to extinguish any hope that the terrorists may have by proscribing Sinn Fein and bringing its members to justice for illegal activities. If the Government know of other organisations that should be proscribed, they should proscribe them. They are responsible, and they must do what it is their business to do.

Neither the vast sums of money spent, nor increased RUC and military manpower will defeat the IRA. It is the proper allocation and deployment of that money and manpower that will defeat it. The security policy of Northern Ireland must change, and change significantly. The reactive mentality of protectionism must change to a proactive mentality of dynamic aggression against the terrorists. The security forces and not the terrorists must take the initiative. One cannot win the war against the IRA by spreading the security forces in an attempt to protect all IRA targets. If, as Government sources tell us, there are about 500 IRA men, why cannot they be monitored and marked by the security forces and dealt with when they try to pursue their campaigns of murder? The time has come for a change in strategy and in Government policy.

We must also get off the treadmill of emergency legislation. We are debating yet another renewal tonight, and emergency legislation has now become the norm. This is the way we live in Northern Ireland: the norm is terrorism and murder. It has become normal for our children to be brought up against that background. My children are past 20 and, every day of their childhood, they heard of policemen being murdered, of bombings, killings and awful attacks. We must break away from that norm, and ask what emergency legislation does. It serves only to maintain the status quo, and we shall not get anywhere without a change of strategy.

Emergency legislation is the excuse that successive Governments have used to maintain the status quo. The law-abiding people are willing to forgo some of their civil liberties if it means an end in the short to medium term to the nightmare, but they are not willing to give them up indefinitely just so that the Government can maintain the status quo. That should not be the motivation behind the legislation that the Government introduce. The motivation ought to be to deal effectively with the violence, to nip it in the bud, and to bring about stability and peace—and not allow the emergency situation to be institutionalised by time, which is what is happening.

The Unionist population is not convinced that the present Government have the will to defeat terrorism, not just in condemnatory, graphic, melodramatic descriptions but by definite actions that strike at its heart. Actions speak louder than words. The people of Northern Ireland have no confidence in the Government's will to deliver peace. They say, "Give us an effective security policy and you will get our full confidence and support. Let us see the job being done." The IRA and all its fellow travellers—those who talk to it—are deceiving themselves when they say that they are interested in political progress. They are more concerned with inflicting the vilest crimes on a free people to ensure that, in any political statement, they can call the tune.

What would Ireland be if the IRA won the war? What sort of settlement would it be? Who would want to live in an Ireland controlled by the IRA? In the infant days of the Irish Free State, the new Government under Michael Collins demonstrated its determination to extinguish

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violence. There was resolution and determination—a lesson which the British Government should learn from Irish history.

So much money has been wasted in Ulster because the Government have not destroyed terrorism. In January this year the total compensation paid out over the past nine months was £22·8 million. Provision for bomb-damaged property between January and March was a further £10 million to be paid on compensation claims. If the Government pursued a policy of inflicting injury on the IRA, there would be no need for that expense. Targets are many and terrorists are few. We cannot expect the police to protect every possible target. They ought to be deployed against the terrorists.

We must also consider the disruption. The City of London has witnessed the kind of disruption that the IRA has caused in our city. The disruption that terrorism brings robs our city and Province of employment and investment. Last year 19 days were lost due to traffic being thrown into chaos because of bomb alert hoaxes. One hundred and forty-three vehicles have been hijacked in the past 12 months in an attempt to bring our city to a standstill. In respect of only 23 of those hijackings of vehicles was anyone arrested, brought to court and tried.

In the past 12 months, bomb disposal experts responded to 1,758 call-outs. That was the highest total in 13 years and it looks as though the record will be broken again this year. Those are the sad statistics. The largest bomb ever used in Northern Ireland was defused at Annaghmartin. Massive bombs were exploded in Glenanne, Kilrea, Markethill and Craigavon. That is what has happened since we last discussed these matters.

The spiral of appalling killings is becoming more horrendous as 1992 advances. Forty-seven people have been killed already this year, 45 of them civilians. More than 12,000 troops are in Northern Ireland. In all, there are about 35,000 security personnel in the Province. Yet the Government assure us that there are only 500 active terrorists. Why, then, cannot the security forces do something to deal with the problem? The spiral of vile criminal activity will continue for as long as the current inept attitude of the Government is permitted to continue. Emergency legislation can be successful only if it is backed up with effective action.

We heard from the Secretary of State about border security. I was not satisfied when he said that the people who open the roads in Northern Ireland cannot be prosecuted because there is no law in the south about that. Those people come into Northern Ireland and do that particular job. We hear about it continually on the radio. Public figures and representatives advocate opening roads. No effective action seems to be taken against that.

I could repeat the things that I have said over many years in this place, but I do not want to weary the House. Northern Ireland can climb out of the litany of failure only if democratic structures are nurtured and the security forces are given the opportunity to deal with the problem.

The one point with which I want to deal tonight is the attitude of the Irish Government in deliberately refusing to extradite people wanted in Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom for terrorist attacks. The list of IRA men freed in the Irish Republic yet wanted in the United Kingdom continues to grow, despite claims and promises that the law will be reformed.

In February 1990 there was the case of Clarke and Finucane—convicted IRA murderers who had escaped from the Maze prison. They were released by the Irish Supreme Court on the spurious judgment that if they were returned to the Maze they would be "assaulted or injured." Such allegations do more to destroy any hope of good cross-community and cross-border relations.

In 1990 the courts in the south refused to extradite Owen Carron him for political offences. The political offence was the possession of firearms. In December 1988, in the case of Patrick Ryan—the most notorious case in recent Irish history of extradition—the Irish Attorney-General permitted that priest to go free on the basis that he could not receive a fair trial if he was extradited. Patrick McVeigh, who was wanted for charges of bombings in the United Kingdom, had his warrant refused by the Irish court on the basis that it was faulty.

In August 1986, John Gerard O'Reilly, who was wanted in Belfast on charges of conspiracy to murder, was released in Dublin because the warrants were defective. In March 1986, Evelyn Glenholmes, a triple IRA murder suspect, was released in Dublin because of alleged faulty warrants. In December 1985, Brendan Burns, who was wanted for killing soldiers in Northern Ireland, was released because warrants were declared invalid.

In December 1982, Dominic McGlinchy was wanted for murdering an elderly postmistress. The Irish Supreme Court ruled that such a murder was not a political offence, and he was the first suspect to be extradited to Northern Ireland for trial. At his trial in Northern Ireland, he was acquitted—I am sure that he would agree that it was a fair trial—and re-extradited to the Republic, where he was jailed for other offences. The excuse that suspects would not get a fair trial in Northern Ireland has been exploded —it is a myth. Claims that suspects will receive an unfair hearing in the United Kingdom courts are purely fictional. Two years after the McGlinchy episode, Seamus Shannon was returned for trial in Belfast in connection with the murder of Sir Norman Stronge and his son. Shannon was acquitted.

Other cases in which suspects have been extradited include Gerard Harte, who was extradited in 1988 and gaoled, Robert Russell, who was extradited in August 1989 and regaoled, and Paul Kane, who was extradited in April 1988 and regaoled.

Those extradition figures show the absolute failure by the Republic to keep faith with its claim of wanting to be a good neighbour. The IRA can openly abuse the border as a safe haven, and the Irish Supreme Court openly sanctions such claims. It is little wonder that the northern majority refuse to participate in any proposed cross-border relations.

In 50 per cent. of those extradition cases in which the British Government have been successful in extraditing a suspect, the suspect has been acquitted, thus making a mockery of the Irish Supreme Court's claim that those who are extradited to Northern Ireland for political offences will not receive a fair trial.

The time has come when the Government must look carefully at the problem of those who are held in Castlereagh. I do not see any difficulty in showing a video without sound, indicating whether an officer approaches a prisoner, whether he strikes a prisoner, or whether he does

anything that he should not do. I do not see what the objection is. There are some objections to recording an entire interview because of security reasons, and I can understand why, but I do not see why there should be such objections to a picture. Not only Roman Catholics but Protestants object.

I have a serious case at the moment involving accusations by a mother who was taken to Castlereagh. She is an old woman of 70, and she was taken to Castlereagh and shown her son sitting in a cell. The police are alleged to have said to her, "You see your son there? Well, he will be there for ever." That is very serious. The way to deal with such a case is to film the people concerned. There may be difficulties for the defence and for security in recording everything that is available, but I do not see why we cannot have a camera record of a suspect——

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Michael Mates): Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman. That facility has existed for some time. Cameras are monitored independently by uniformed members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary quite separate from the investigation branch in Castlereagh. All the time a suspect is under interrogation he is watched from outside on a closed-circuit video by a uniformed officer of the rank of inspector.

Rev Ian Paisley: I accept that, but is a recording available? Can the Minister answer that? Can a recording be made available to the judge in a court?

Mr. Mates: No, the interviews are not recorded, but the inspector takes a note of when the person for interview goes in and how long he is there and watches him the whole time he is there. That is part of the inspector's daily duty.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I accept what the Minister says, but he has not given me any new information. I must not have put my message across. I am arguing that a recording should be made which can be made available when accusations are made. I can only see that as helping to clear police officers. I know that it is a usual ploy of people brought in for questioning to accuse the police. We all know that. Why cannot we have a recording of the interview without any words being recorded? I am aware of the argument about a full recording of the words. I am talking about seeing the interview afterwards. That is an important point and the Government must face up to it.

We must also make it clear that there is no support in any part of the community for holding people for long periods without trial. That feeling goes across the communities. It is not a pleasant thing to be held in Crumlin Road prison. I have done two stretches there, so I know Crumlin Road prison well. It is unpleasant to be in a cell for 24 hours every day. I do not know whether any men here have been in a cell, but to sit there with the door locked 23 hours a day for perhaps a year or 18 months is unacceptable.

When I visit the prison as the Member of Parliament for my constituency and as the Member of the European Parliament for the whole of Northern Ireland, all the men say, "Get us tried. Get us to court. Then, if we are found guilty, at least we shall have reasonable living conditions." Living conditions in Crumlin Road prison are not reasonable. The Government must face up to that, and I hope that they will. I know that there are difficulties.

I am glad that there is now proper segregation in the Crumlin Road prison and that we do not have confrontations between various sets of visitors. I hope that that segregation will long continue. The Government may argue tonight that it is not separation or segregation but no longer do Republicans and Loyalists mix. I was talking to a prisoner the other day when I was doing my duty at the prison who said, "I never see a Republican." I said, "Long may it continue." The Republicans say, "I never see a Loyalist." That is the way it ought to be.

I hope that the conditions in Crumlin Road will be brought under careful scrutiny by the Government and that something will be done to ease not only the time that it takes to bring people to trial but the conditions in which they are held while waiting for trial.

9.12 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): It was most appropriate that Lord Colville prefaced his report by outlining the dilemma that the Government and security services face in the fight against terrorism. Unfortunately, I was once again disappointed at the way in which the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) trivialised the debate and displayed what at best can be called a degree of naivety in dealing with the difficulties that face the security services in their fight against terrorism. I pay tribute to members of the security services who place themselves between the law-abiding community and those people who would bring murder and mayhem to our community.

I suppose that an example of the difficulties that the security services have was the bombing campaign in Belfast over the Christmas period. Business men and Christmas shoppers were held to ransom by the terrorists, and the imposition of security checks at the level necessary to prevent bombings was also a source of frustration to the community. Inevitably, it led at times to the community being less than sympathetic towards the job that the security services had to undertake.

It is important that sensible decisions are taken more quickly, and before the event. As to the Belfast bombing campaign, my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and I had numerous meetings prior to that campaign with the former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. We told him that our information indicated that vast quantities of explosives were being brought across the frontier from the Irish Republic into west Belfast so that a campaign could be mounted.

We pressed privately and publicly for a couple of extra battalions to be deployed along the frontier, so that a degree of interdiction could occur. That advice was not heeded. We have two extra battalions now and we are glad to see them, but they were not made available in time.

The Government and the Ministry of Defence must give a greater commitment to the task confronting the security services. When reinforcement in the short term or medium term is required it should be available when requested—not after the event. It is important also that our cross-frontier checkpoints are properly manned. I shall refer to them in detail later. While there remains ineffective liaison and co-operation with the Irish Republic, we must look to our own frontier defences.

[Mr. Ken Maginnis]

We are not helped by our own tourist board, which goes out of its way to criticise our frontier checkpoints—describing them as ugly, forbidding and an offputting experience for tourists. That is totally to misunderstand the need for the checkpoints, to proect those who live close to the frontier—as my constituents do—and to intercept arms and explosives coming from the Irish Republic in considerable quantities.

I do not need to remind the House that Libya supplied 150 tonnes of arms and explosives that were imported into the Irish Republic. They were dispersed throughout that jurisdication, and are now brought across as required to enable terrorists to wreak havoc on our community. I suppose that I can expect little else from the Northern Ireland tourist board than criticism of the checkpoints given that it sees the conflict as a curiosity factor that could be positively harnessed to encourage people to visit Northern Ireland. I hope that the Secretary of State and his Ministers will pay more heed to the ordinary people, who for 20 years have withstood the onslaught of terrorism, than to those who sit in ivory towers and who believe that some 5 per cent. of abnormal people should be catered for in the tourist programme. I do not know what the tourist board's ideas do for the 95 per cent. of people who come to Northern Ireland for justifiable reasons.

I am worried because I read today that the Killeen checkpoint may be abandoned. I do not believe that it has been totally effective. For years, members of my party and I have argued that a checkpoint that can be driven around quite easily is ineffective. We have made official representations on that issue but we have not been heard. Instead of making amends for its shortcomings, we have heard the hint—it was perhaps only a fishing exercise to see how we would react—that the Killeen checkpoint may be closed. If that was a fishing exercise, I assure those responsible that we are not prepared to see the frontier opened up, with no checks against the importation of weapons and other illegal goods.

The purpose of permanent vehicle checkpoints needed to be re-examined, because for years and years we have argued that "permanent vehicle checkpoint" is the wrong name for such frontier posts. It suggests the wrong idea. I would prefer to call them permanent patrol bases, because to use them simply to prevent traffic moving backwards and forwards across the frontier is not enough. We must use them as jumping-off points for pre-emptive patrolling. Patrolling cannot take place 10 to 15 miles from the frontier, because that creates a no-man's-land, in which the terrorist dominates and in which he is able to lay land-mines and prepare ambushes. Those areas become more difficult to police.

Lord Colville referred to those actively involved in trying to open up unapproved roads that lie between the various monitored and official routes across the frontier. I am afraid that those people are able to operate because of the ineffective legislation in the Irish Republic. They approach closed roads from the Irish Republic with lorry-loads of stones, earth-moving equipment, diggers and bulldozers and, from there, they are able to reopen the crossings, thus providing more access points for the terrorists who murder and bomb in Northern Ireland.

Does the Secretary of State agree that most of the bombs exploded within 15 to 20 miles of the frontier had been prepared in the Irish Republic? Again and again the vehicles involved are stolen in Clones, Dundalk or Sligo. Close to the frontier the campaign is directed from the Irish Republic, but the weapons and explosives used in Belfast also come from the Irish Republic, from as far away as Limerick. As Lord Colville says, there is no justification for saying that the closure of minor, or, as we call them, unapproved, roads greatly hinders farmers on both sides of the frontier. It may cause a small amount of difficulty. Lord Colville said that the diversion caused by the closure of Farellys crossing in my constituency was about 3 km.

Between 100 and 125 tonnes of Gaddafi's weaponry is still in the Irish Republic and somebody has to persuade the Government of that jurisdiction to do more to find that weaponry more quickly. In the interim, we must try to implement an effective means of interdiction close to the frontier. It is too late when the explosives wreak havoc in Belfast of Lurgan or other Northern Ireland towns.

The Government must concentrate not just on weapons; they must investigate racketeering. I congratulate Customs and Excise, the police and the Army on their success to date and on the seizure in the past month of thousands of illegally copied videos and pornographic material. That has been a serious blow to the IRA's ability to finance itself. But not enough is being done to ensure that the finances of illegal organisations are cut much more quickly. I know that that is difficult.

Lord Colville says that with the single market there will not be the same rip-off with hydrocarbons, beers and spirits and other such products. But we are worried not just about illegal videos and pornographic material. Illegal substances such as clenbuterol, better known as angel dust, are widely used not just in Ireland but throughout Europe. In Ireland angel dust is profitable. I shall give the House an idea of how profitable it is. A cannister that is "wholesaled" for £40 will be passed on to the farmer for £120. That is a 300 per cent. profit. The farmer will be able to treat 10 animals with that amount of angel dust, and each animal will probably increase in value by between £100 and £150. There will be a profit of between £1,000 and £1,500 from the farmer's £120. Does anyone believe that a business that is more profitable than that of cocaine, so we are told, will be missed by the terrorist? The terrorist controls the market from the rest of Europe into Ireland and from South America into Ireland.

Sadly, I must find fault with the Department of Agriculture. In its desire not to harm the majority of good, decent farmers who are trying to make a living and produce good beef for the consumer, it sweeps the issue under the carpet at an early stage. I went to the Department and I was assured that its checks and balances were such that the use of clenbuterol could not be sustained. I was told that it would be detected but, unfortunately, that has proved not to be so. As a result, the terrorist is making great capital.

The Government fall down, as it were, when it comes to claims against the Royal Ulster Constabulary that are made by those who are taken in for interrogation. On being released, there are claims of ill-treatment, which constitute a real money-spinner. We reached the stage when a firm of solicitors, Madden and Finucane, to which I have referred in the House before, is able to boast on behalf of its clients about the vast sums that it has obtained

in compensation from the Northern Ireland Office without ever having to go to court. Out-of-court settlements are unforgivable.

I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Newry and Mourne was worried about the description—I cannot remember it exactly—of the people of Northern Ireland as "litigious". In other words, it was said that they were keen to get into court. We saw examples of that for years when actions were brought against the road service authority. There was no obligation on anyone to lift his foot or to look where he was walking. Indeed, the exact opposite was the case. If someone thought that he could find a hole to fall into, he sought it diligently. There were estates where there was not one house in which someone had not been to court claiming damages because of a fall in the street.

Mr. Mallon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maginnis: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be able to take up the matter in his own speech. I shall not give way because of the time.

Mr. Mallon: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. If the hon. Gentleman feels that it is necessary to refer to me again without giving me the right of reply, perhaps he will at least refer to my constituency correctly.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) is capable of doing that.

Mr. Maginnis: Claims resulting from the state of the road surface dropped dramatically when claimants were forced over the step and into the court to prove their case. Out-of-court settlements are a disaster.

It would be interesting if those claiming ill-treatment by the police were forced into court where they could be cross-examined. We would see some interesting people with some interesting connections in court. It might be a revelation.

One of the most surprising of all claims that were settled out of court was that made by the widow of Daniel Doherty. Daniel Doherty was shot in Londonderry as he approached a hospital there, armed and intent on killing a member of the security services. One fails to understand how his wife could be compensated for his death.

I remind the House of the reply when I asked about the case. I was told:

"It is not the practice to publish details of police investigations. The death of Daniel Doherty was fully investigated by the RUC, and the report passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who directed 'no prosecution' of the soldiers involved.

However, I believe that it is widely accepted that Daniel Doherty was engaged in terrorist activities when he was killed."—[*Official Report*, 16 December 1991; Vol. 201, c. 59.]

The irony of that award to Daniel Doherty's widow is that the person who was attacked received no compensation, nor when he died prematurely did his widow. Where is the justice in that? The Secretary of State and his team must give some consideration to that. Justice is as much about ensuring that people who do not deserve do not get as about ensuring that people who do deserve receive what is rightly theirs.

The whole issue of answers in the House must be considered carefully. It is necessary that members of the community and Members of the House should know what is going on, but again and again when I ask questions I find that the facts about the situation in Northern Ireland are hidden.

Last December, I asked about the award of compensation when terrorists had been shot dead or shot and injured by the security services. I was told:

"The available information is set out in the table below. It should be noted that this information, which is based on the date of settlement and not of the incident concerned, does not differentiate between 'terrorist' and 'non-terrorist' incidents".—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1991; Vol. 200, c. 522.]

How can the House be kept informed when we do not differentiate between terrorists and non-terrorists when it comes to the compensation that is awarded, mostly in out-of-court settlements?

If there is one issue on which I agree with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North it is the issue that many of us consider to be the crux of the Northern Ireland security question—but I think that I agree with every hon. Member in the House on that issue. I believe that there must be de facto police primacy in Northern Ireland. It is not enough simply to believe in police primacy; it must work in practice, and so far it has not done so.

I do not intend to go into the Nelson case, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North did, or to rely on newspaper reports or television programmes. I followed the trial of Brian Nelson, however, and elements in it deeply disturbed my colleagues and me. Let me say clearly that, although my party wishes to give the security services wholehearted support, we do not intend to try to justify the unjustifiable. If we do that, we shall deliver the security services in their entirety as hostages to fortune: it would be self-defeating as well as morally wrong.

The police know exactly how far they can go within the law—and God knows, at times decisions are difficult; mistakes have been made, and will be made again. They know how far they can go, because it is clearly laid down for them. For that reason, I believe that no aspect of security must be hidden from the police. The new deputy chief constable will have operational responsibility for all aspects of policing, and I look forward to seeing him get to grips with all the available intelligence and information, whether it is made available to the Army, MI5 or the police themselves. Someone will be accountable, and in that way we shall deprive the terrorist of one of his greatest weapons: the insinuation that the security services are involved in illegal activities.

A problem arises when Army units are brought into Northern Ireland for three-month roulement tours. I am not happy even with six-month roulement tours, but I know the difficulty of providing the necessary level of military manpower in Northern Ireland. As has already been mentioned tonight, an unfortunate situation recently developed in Coalisland, in my constituency. Soldiers behaved unwisely, but I do not believe that they were to blame: they had been brought in on a three-month roulement tour, without being given the proper training that should be available to everyone who serves in Northern Ireland.

It would be wise to ensure that, in future, three-month roulement battalions are held at brigade reserve level and are not put on the streets where, without the proper briefing and knowing that they are in difficult areas, they tend to view the entire community as hostile.

That attitude is reciprocated. There are many decent people in Coalisland, but there is a strong IRA element

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within the community. We must not give those people the opportunity to exploit our weaknesses. Things have now settled down, and I hope that such an incident will not happen again. My party wholeheartedly supports the security services, but we cannot justify the unjustifiable.

My final point——

Mr. Mallon: Hear, hear.

Mr. Maginnis: Of course, Madam Chairman——

Mr. Mallon: Madam Speaker; get that right at least.

Mr. Maginnis: Yes, Madam Speaker.

I do not doubt that the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) will be relieved when I stop speaking, but he will have to spend a few minutes trying to avoid the issue of how we effectively deal with terrorism.

Mr. Mallon: Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Maginnis: You will hear, Madam Speaker——

Mr. Mallon: Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Maginnis: Given what the hon. Member——

Mr. Mallon: Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Maginnis: —said from a sedentary position, I think that I am entitled to answer.

Mr. Mallon: Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Maginnis: No, I will not.

Mr. Mallon: How can the hon. Gentleman accuse me of refusing to comment if he will not give way?

Mr. Maginnis: We shall hear many platitudes from the hon. Gentleman but little that is designed to help the situation in Northern Ireland or to show some understanding of the position in which our security forces find themselves.

I welcome the news that a commissioner will be given access to the holding centres. That will help to protect the police, who have a difficult job in those centres. I hope that the commissioner's brief will be very carefully thought out and explicitly defined. In the past five or six years, great improvements have been made in monitoring holding centres. More attention is now paid to the way in which notes are validated. That is an improvement compared with 10 or 15 years ago. There are now means of visually overseeing what goes on when suspects are being questioned.

Most sensible people will agree entirely with Lord Colville's decision that video-recordings should not be made. Without the present system of questioning, less intelligence would be given to the security services. Much good work is done in holding centres in a way that protects the person being questioned as well as the questioner. It would not matter what method was used to acquire the video recordings or to try to safeguard their use, there would come a time when a solicitor or barrister would be able to convince the court that it was in the interests of justice to see those recordings, and lives would be put in danger.

I hope that, although the commissioner will have the right to visit unannounced at any time, day or night, he will not have direct access to the room in which suspects are being questioned. I believe that he will have the right to watch and listen to what is shown on the video. In that way, he will be much more effective. The police will not know that he is there, so their behaviour will at all times have to be circumspect; nor, of course, will the suspect know that the commissioner is there, so he will always have difficulty deciding how and when he should allege ill-treatment. Overall, meticulous care in the way in which the police carry out their duties is important—it is also important for their benefit.

The morale of the community depends on the legislation available to deal with terrorism. Many would think that the legislation is inadequate, but if we had the task, I do not think we could do much better. Legislation must be fair and must be accepted by the vast majority of the community if it is to work. I am concerned that the community does not have confidence in the legislation, and it is the direct responsibility of the Northern Ireland Office to reassure the community.

In 1984-85, 43 people died as a result of terrorism. In 1990-91, the last year for which I have figures, 82 people died. That is an increase of 90 per cent. since the period just before the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed. In 1985, 89 per cent. of murders were carried out by Republican terrorists and 11 per cent. by Loyalist terrorists. In 1990 the figure for Republican groups was 71 per cent. and for Loyalist groups it had risen to 29 per cent. Again, I believe that that was due to the lack of morale in the Loyalist community. I hope that the Secretary of State will bear in mind the need to raise the morale of the community through the passing of honest and reliable information to the community and to the House. That is a prerequisite for success against terrorists in the community.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I must inform the House that, unless speeches are curtailed on a voluntary basis, I shall not be able to call all hon. Members who wish to speak.

9.54 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): A sense of déjà vu descends over relatively seasoned debaters of this issue, and rehearsed arguments are given a further hearing. My position is unequivocal and unambiguous: I deeply lament and regret the circumstances which have led to the measures but, given those circumstances, I regard the measures as absolutely essential and look forward to their being approved tonight.

I wish to be selective and return the debate to Lord Colville's report. In his opening remarks, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State drew attention to the summary statement on page 2 of Lord Colville's report, which says:

> "The new Act, and new arrangements in it, seem to have been introduced and have since been operated without any appreciable adverse reaction. I do not recommend the suspension of any of its provisions."

That makes good reading, but some points are worthy of attention and debate.

I was particularly interested in Lord Colville's comments on one of the new sections in the Act, section 30, and the provisions regarding the possession of items intended for terrorist purposes. The origins of that measure lie in Lord Colville's report of 1990 on the emergency provisions legislation. Lord Colville acknowledges that it is early days yet and says that, so far, there

have been no convictions. At the time of his writing, three people were on remand. None the less, he points to that item as being a valuable weapon in the armoury against terrorism and already sees signs of its having a deterrent effect. That is encouraging and we can look forward, next year or whenever we next review the matter, to seeing further evidence of the progress of that part of the measure.

The second subject to which I wish to refer is the obtaining of confessions, to which the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) referred in his opening comments. Lord Colville's 1992 review seems to show that he is happy with what he has found. He concludes on page 10:

"Certainly nothing has happened to throw doubt on the wisdom of having re-enacted section 11 this time last year".

On page 14, he writes:

"I cannot accordingly recommend that there is any material which should now lead to a relaxation of the section 11 rule. If anything terrorists are becoming more adept at resisting interrogation".

Notwithstanding Lord Colville's comments, it is right that we still question why there is a divergence with regard to the admissibility in evidence of statements between EPA and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. I have not yet been reassured that sufficient grounds exist for that divergence. I note that Lord Colville's paper refers to hostile assessments of the situation in Northern Ireland in the light of that section.

Another area of concern is complaints about ill treatment at holding centres—pages 24 to 38 in the report. By any criteria of judgment, the catalogue that Lord Colville describes makes uneasy reading. In his report on the prevention of terrorism legislation in March last year, he spoke of his growing concern about complaints of ill treatment at holding centres. Page 25 of the report says:

"I suggest that something needs urgently to be done."

His 11-point description of a typical course of events makes profoundly disturbing reading. Will my hon. Friend the Minister, in summing up the debate, note that we want to eliminate the running sore of disquiet on those matters?

Having said that, I warmly welcome the measures and sincerely hope that they will meet with the approval of the House tonight.

9.59 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): This is one of the most depressing debates in the House, for the good reason that there is a certain amount of ritual about it. That ritual repeats itself because the problem and its supposed solution keep being repeated ad infinitum.

If we had the honesty to admit reality, it is that there is no solution to be found through this type of legislation. That is not to say that there is not a need for legislation that copes with terrorists. From listening to tonight's debate, one would almost assume that the order will solve the problems. I regret it, but in two, five, 10 or 20 years' time, exactly the same problems will be faced by those dealing with the legislation and exactly the same points and comments will be made, if we do not have the honesty to question the basis of the legislation—that it provides the power to find a solution. I do not believe that that is possible. To stop this ritualistic dance, I ask of us all not to repeat what we have said ad infinitum. That is what we are doing.

The Government, whatever their structure, will defend the legislation with great self-righteousness. They will score political points over the Opposition. The Opposition, whatever their complexion, will oppose because they are the Opposition. The Northern Ireland Members who are here from all parties will range over various factors, from angel dust, through people getting their big toe broken and a compensation claim, to the human tragedies that face us all. If we do not face up to the facts, that kind of black theatre will continue. Sooner or later, a Member on the Government Benches, whoever the Government are, will have the courage to ask: is this not becoming a ritual, is there not another way, are we not at the end of history and at the beginning of the future, and is there not a way other than continuing as we are doing?

What are we doing? Each time the legislation is debated, the law is diluted further. That is not a political point; it is a fact. We have more troops to guard those who are building the border checkpoints, about which the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) spoke at great length. A British Army brigadier told us publicly that it took one brigade to guard those who were building the look-out post at Annaghmartin. While that was happening, the Irish army was across the border guarding the brigade that was guarding those who were building the checkpoint. I call it black theatre and that example starts to put it into perspective.

We now have more technology on the hillsides and look-out posts that see nothing. We have look-out posts that cannot see when terrorists are sitting in front of them making and planting bombs. Those look-out posts are causing anxiety about possible radiation, but the one thing that they cannot do is see. We have more dubious tactics. Could anyone on this side of the Irish sea have watched the "Panorama" programme without feeling slightly ashamed, embarrassed and squeamish about the allegations? I am not in a position to know whether or not they are true, but I do know that the men who made that programme took more than a year to make it, and they were so thorough in their research that I believe that we should at least look at it seriously.

Of course we shall have more checkpoints of the kind referred to by the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone. It is thought good to have these great checkpoints —it keeps people happy. If I happened to live in Britain and if my son were one of the young soldiers blown to bits in one of those static checkpoints, there just to reassure people or keep them happy, I should be a very angry man indeed. Two young men have been blown to bits in my constituency, in a checkpoint which I believe serves no security purpose whatever.

Unless we face reality, and unless some of us start having the courage to question things which we have accepted, or which have been accepted, for so long, we shall have more self-perpetuating failure. It could be the beginning of the future if we had a little bit of courage. If not, we shall come back year after year, for however many years it is, and we shall all be saying the same things.

It is interesting reading the reports in *Hansard*. One could almost have written in advance most of the speeches that have been made tonight—the reference to angel dust being the honourable exception. In reality, there is nothing more for the Minister to say. He cannot take away from the legislation; he adds a little each time. There is little more that any of us can say. We can only try to ask for a change of thinking on the subject. We must ask ourselves

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the fundamental question: is the legislation capable of succeeding and of solving the problem? If it is not, the Government should think again.

I take this opportunity—it may cause me problems—to say to the IRA that it cannot win with this campaign of violence. There can be no military victory for the IRA, and I say to it unequivocally, "Stop now, without any discussion, because what you are doing is wrong." I say to the Government that they cannot win either. There can be no military victory for this Government or for any other Government in circumstances such as this. So I say to the Government, too, "Stop. Think. Reassess the situation and see whether you are going down the wrong road". Is there not another way of proceeding, which will not cost the British taxpayer £2·5 billion a year—money which, by and large, goes down the tubes in a wholly unproductive way—and which will not cost lives, scar the countryside with look-out posts, closed border roads, checkpoints in the hills or whatever? They should ask themselves whether there is another approach to the problem.

It is time that some of us started to tell the IRA and the others involved in the search for a military solution—and that is the Government—that our peace, lives and future happen to be more important that their prejudice or principles. The people of Northern Ireland deserve better than to be locked into military combat between two sides, neither of which can win. It is time that there was some thinking on that. I know that that view will not be accepted readily—of course it will not—but it is time that someone started asking some questions.

Much has been made of the "Panorama" programme, and I shall not labour the point. I merely ask what sort of system it is which, after 20 years and with all the legislation that is in place, must rely on the dubious tactics whose use was alleged on that programme. In a previous renewal debate, the then Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), said:

"we shall continue to work unreservedly for the defeat of terrorism with all the means at our disposal that are compatible with the letter and spirit of the rule of law." [*Official Report*, 12 March 1990, Vol. 169, c. 32.]

Would any objective person watching that "Panorama" programme accept that that was compatible in any way with the spirit and letter of the rule of law? I make no judgment about that programme. However, if a reputable programme with the investigative powers of "Panorama" makes so many allegations, it is not doing that without information or with faulty information.

It is clear from the transcript taken in a court of law that Colonel J was, in his own words, in many ways colluding with murder and ignoring it. If that is the case, we had better sit up and end the self-righteousness that is injected into this kind of debate. We should ask ourselves what kind of society is being left for us in the north of Ireland.

Yes, we have our problems. We have enough of them and we do not need any more. We do not need that can of worms every two, three or five years. That is not compatible with the rule of law.

Perhaps the most serious point is the allegation that Colonel J and FRU knew that arms were to be shipped into the north of Ireland from South Africa, but they did not intercept them. Those arms were used to kill the lady from the chemist's shop, the people in the betting shop on the Ormeau road and God knows how many other people. If that is so—and it must be the Government's responsibility to discover whether it is true—Colonel J should be in the dock to answer for collusion and involvement in murder. As a former Prime Minister once said, "Murder is murder is murder." There cannot be any conditions on it. I hope that the Secretary of State and the Minister of State will take that on board and ensure that we do not have such a legacy in Northern Ireland.

I want to make a few points about the Colville report. Lord Colville is always complimented when he produces his report. I have tried to understand the mind of Lord Colville in his most recent report. Normally his reports are very objective and impartial. As a lawyer, he has been able to deal with the problems from a distance and to assess them.

About 14 pages of Lord Colville's report rubbish the right of a person to make a claim of ill-treatment while in custody. I am not naive enough to think that people do not make spurious claims. However, I believe that there are enough problems to be dealt with in Northern Ireland and there should not be 14 pages of highly partial and pejorative terms like "dubious purposes." The report states:

"even unmeritorious claims can bring acquittal or substantial tax-free cash sums, or both, to those who do not deserve it."

That is in regard to court decisions or decisions to settle out of court. Not only does the report pour scorn on those who make claims; it pours scorn on the legal process itself.

The report also states:

"The system can so seriously be exploited that it serves as an encouragement to false accusations."

Are we saying, or is Lord Colville implying as some previous speakers have implied, that the people of the north of Ireland do not have any integrity whatever? As a person from the north of Ireland, I resent that.

The final insulting paragraph of the report states:

"Considering the allegiance of some of those who exploit the system it is not fanciful to suppose that terrorist organisations take at least part of the damages awarded, so that they are being financed directly at the taxpayers' expense."

The report continues:

"That harsh catalogue deserves intricate analysis of which I will attempt to sketch the outlines."

It does not, with respect. It demands proof that that happens. It demands hard facts in at least one case to back it up. Is it there? Lord Colville is a lawyer, someone who has been preparing his report for a number of years. There is not one scrap of evidence—nothing which is not hypothetical. There is nothing to suggest that the points that he makes in the first 14 pages have any great relevance to the problem. That is most disappointing indeed. That brings his position into question. That section of the report certainly seems to be an apologia for the legislation rather than a critical analysis of it. Surely a person who is engaged to do that task must provide evidence if he draws such fundamental conclusions. He has not done so.

Lord Colville then concludes by making three recommendations which disturb me. The first one is that a log of everything be kept so that

"the slightest incident is noted lest it should turn into a complaint . . . by way of pre-empting any later claim of abuse."

That reminds me of a statement by Willie John McBride when he was captain of the British Lions when they went to play New Zealand. His instruction was, "Get

your retaliation in first, lads." The report smacks of that, and that cannot be good for the legislation or the consideration of it.

If we are to advise people to pre-empt any claims of abuse, what will happen to that log? How would one deal with the incident at Coalisland? Have we a log on that, as Lord Colville tells us? If he is right, it surely is written in the log book of some of those soldiers. Then they will tell us why they acted unwisely, as the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone said, when they went into a bar, shot three people and destroyed the bar. That is a fact. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell us about that. There was a photograph of the incident in Derry. Was that in a log? If we are not going to be honest about these matters, we will merely conduct a charade, and that must be challenged.

Some of Lord Colville's other points should also be challenged. They are that a number of claims are spurious because they are not backed up by complaints to the Police Complaints Commission. He is implying that, in effect, the way to deal with that is to ensure that anybody who makes a civil claim for compensation should be required to make a formal complaint so that one version may be compared with the other.

A person in my constituency made a complaint to the Police Complaints Commission. He was subsequently charged with an offence by the RUC. His evidence to the Police Complaints Commission was used against him in court by the police. How did the police get that evidence from the Police Complaints Commission? Is that ethical? Is that professionally correct? People would be very concerned if that approach were taken. I shall give the person's name to the Minister of State so that he can inquire into the matter. I have the name, the time and the place. That is something into which Lord Colville should inquire, but he comes out with recommendations that simply do not measure up.

Much was made about checkpoints. I believe that checkpoints are a death trap for those who have to man them. The Minister and the Secretary of State know my views, so I shall not labour them. But at a time when frontier posts are coming down all over Europe, when Europe is beginning to integrate and when other countries are moving away from the history and the problems, we are building more frontier posts and more edifices on the border. Instead of letting in a breath of fresh air, we are entering the siege mentality that has been shown throughout the debate tonight.

We should examine the ethos of the legislation closely, not least where it refers to terrorist financing. There was a massive operation not so long ago, mainly in my constituency. I am told that it involved 1,000 soldiers and policemen and that it was remarkably successful. I am not sure that any charges have been brought as yet. I do not know whether any charges will be brought. I do not know whether any charges will centre on some people involved in terrorism.

However, ordinary decent people in Newry, south Down and south Armagh were subjected to that operation who have no connection with terrorism. We were worried when it was trumpeted from the Northern Ireland Office in the media that the operation was the final body blow to the IRA in that area. It was not very efficient. I hope that the Minister will take steps to ensure that the next time it is efficient.

One gentleman, whose name I shall give to the Minister, had his house raided. His life insurance policies were taken away. Photocopies of the policies were sent back. That is against the legislation in any case. Photocopied life insurance policies are no use to anyone because they are not accepted. Of course, at the end of the day, it was the wrong man and the wrong house anyhow. But still his life insurance policies have not been returned.

In another case, a highly respected accountant was searched. Even though the warrant identified the files that were to be taken, every other file in not only his house but that of his mother-in-law and his partner was scrutinised. In a third case, a person had his house identified as that belonging to another person of the same name. He was subjected to the same type of approach.

What does that do in a place such as south Armagh? What attitude does it leave among ordinary, decent people? It leaves them with the impression that when it comes to the operation of the legislation, they come a poor third and their position is not given much consideration. I know that the Minister of State thinks that it is funny, but I happen to believe that every individual has a right to respect for his or her position and his or her rights.

If an individual breaks the law, society has the right to subject that person to the rigours of the law through a proper court system. But the longer that legislation such as we are considering tonight remains, the more we postpone the day when we can set about solving the problems and the greater legacy of distrust and lack of confidence in the law the Government will leave in my country. It is time that they started to face up to that.

10.23 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Madam Speaker, although for reasons that you will readily understand it seems rather a long time ago, I recall that the elegance of the language used by the Secretary of State in introducing the debate did nothing to conceal the horror of the catalogue of death and destruction of which he spoke. Indeed, if anything, the dispassionate account that he gave underlined the unspeakable nature of the behaviour which he described as a justification for the renewal of the order.

I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement about the appointment of an independent commissioner and an independent assessor. He will understand that we will want to know the terms of the appointments, and the competence that attaches to them.

I welcome the Secretary of State's remarks about his attempts to reduce the time suspects spend on remand. The whole House welcomes the efforts that he will put into that. I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will not close his mind entirely to the possibility of a statutory scheme. Already within the United Kingdom there is one jurisdiction in which a statutory scheme operates with great success, although I do not pretend for one moment that a statutory scheme such as that in Scotland could be brought into existence by the mere passage of a piece of legislation.

If there is a Division, I shall advise my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote for the order. We shall do so not with any great enthusiasm but because we view it as a regrettable necessity. We shall vote for the order with considerable reservations—not least because it is our

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profound belief that the rights, protections, and civil liberties of all United Kingdom citizens should be the same wherever they live.

Only in the most unusual circumstances can there be any justification for departing from those principles. It is my sad conclusion again this year that such circumstances still obtain in Northern Ireland and justify renewal of the order. That circumstances exist to justify such draconian powers as those that it contains must be a matter of profound regret to us all.

We must not maintain those powers for an instant longer than necessary. We should tolerate them grudgingly, and work to withdraw them at the earliest possible date. Such powers should never be embraced enthusiastically, for they represent a serious incursion into the rights which citizens of the United Kingdom are entitled to expect, and which we look for in all civilised systems of government.

Why do I believe that the powers are justified and that the order should be renewed? It can only be because the cancer of terrorism still stands at the heart of life in Northern Ireland. It can only be because I believe that the powers provide a means of containing that cancer. It is my profound belief that we delude ourselves if we think that more and more stringent powers, or even the more stringent exercise of powers already available, will bring peace and tranquillity to the Province.

So long as the legislation is seen to be strictly necessary, it will be acceptable to the people of Northern Ireland, but if abuses occur or if the powers are too wide the legislation will become counter-productive and public confidence will be dissipated.

I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). I am sorry that he is not in his place, although he has been present throughout the debate. I hope that I do not do him an injustice, but I understood the hon. Gentleman to say that if there is a Division he and his party will be unable to vote for the continuance of the order—I see that the hon. Gentleman has returned to his place—because of their resistance to the power of internment.

I did not understand the hon. Gentleman to challenge the necessity for the other powers in the order. I share his repugnance for the existence of the power of internment, but not his conclusion. If circumstances justify the existence of the other powers, is it adequate to deny those powers to the security forces because of the existence of a power that is not being exercised? That is a question of judgment, but if the hon. Gentleman does not challenge the need for the order's powers, save for that of internment, surely he ought to consider carefully whether he is not dealing the security forces a hand that they will find extremely difficult to play.

There are some who argue for the use of the internment power—curiously, the debate has been notable for an absence of reference to that—and I do not doubt the sincerity of their belief, but I am equally sincere in my belief that its use would be counter-productive. Its use would result in the alienation of communities and create an atmosphere of desperation. It would be a signal of impotence in the face of terrorism.

When the Diplock courts were established on the recommendation of Lord Diplock, I cannot imagine that they were ever seen as more than a short-term measure. Is it not time to reconsider whether trial by jury should be available in Northern Ireland, as in other parts of the kingdom, unless it can be shown that good cause exists for not allowing that right? Should not the onus rest on the prosecution in Northern Ireland to show good cause why a man or woman should not have his or her guilt or innocence determined by a jury?

I understand the security implications of video taping the interviewing of suspects. I am disappointed, however, that the Government do not show a willingness at least to experiment to see if such recordings could not be made without prejudice to the interests of state or security. Surely such recordings would reduce the scope for the denial of confessions subsequently or for unfounded attacks on police methods. Their use might have consequences in terms of combating more easily false claims made against the police. I hope that the Government will keep an open mind on this, because in my judgment the video recording of what transpires between police and suspect would be more likely—it is a question of balance—to serve the interests of justice than the fact that such recording is not available now.

I can say as much from my professional experience as from anything else that it is the nature of the transaction between the suspect and the police which frequently allows someone accused of a crime a peg upon which to hang a defence which would not otherwise be available. I hope that what has been said about the video recording of such interviews will be seriously considered by the Government.

One does not use the word conversion easily in respect of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) lest it be thought to imply anything other than the stern Calvinism or Protestantism of which he is a robust proponent. However, his conversion to the idea that the use of such recordings should be considered reflects a great change of opinion on his part. I hope that I do not do the hon. Gentleman an injustice, and I hope that the Government will keep an open mind on the topic.

The order offers no long-term solution. The best hope for that lies in the talks that the Secretary of State has instituted. It is right and proper that they should not form any part of our discussions tonight. I am not party to those talks, but those engaged in them should understand that the people of the United Kingdom earnestly hope for a successful outcome. They are too worldly and too used to violence in Northern Ireland to believe that a solution is likely to be at hand immediately, but those engaged in the talks should calculate how much good will would result from progress in those talks. They should consider the extent to which the sustained progress and political stability created by such a successful outcome might make orders such as the one that we are debating superfluous. It is too much to hope that we are debating such an order for the last time, but is it too much to hope that that day will not for ever be postponed?

10.34 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) effectively criticised the Labour party's attitude to the legislation. I hope that that criticism will be taken to heart by Labour Members if the House divides, although I hope that it will not. The hon. and learned Gentleman also said that the legislation makes serious incursions into the rights of

citizens. I had difficulty following him on that point because, bearing in mind the fact that the internment power is not operational, no provision in the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 in any way conflicts with the European convention on human rights. Therefore, that Act is not a serious incursion into the rights of citizens. Comments could be made about the detention powers in the prevention of terrorism Act, but that is another matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) welcomed the Secretary of State's announcement about the introduction of an independent commissioner for police centres. I also welcomed his comment about remand prisoners. I am glad to know that there will be target time for bringing people forward for arraignment to reduce remand periods. I understand the reluctance immediately to adopt a statutory scheme, such as the one in Scotland, but I hope that, when the informal targets have been reached, we can move to a statutory scheme, because failure to achieve sensible progression could lead to a deterioration of the position. Such a statutory scheme would ensure that there is no subsequent backsliding.

Much of the debate has turned on Lord Colville's report. Like other hon. Members, I congratulate Lord Colville not only on that report but on his series of reports over the years. They are well worth reading. My one regret about them is that they do not seem to receive the circulation and study that they deserve. People who are worried about the legislation will find that Lord Colville checks matters such as applications for extension of periods in detention and looks extensively at individual cases. That is a considerable reassurance.

I should like to deal with a few other issues in Lord Colville's report. He says that the current difficulties about definition arise from the difference in statistics emanating from the Lord Chancellor's office and the Northern Ireland Office and suggests that that conflict should be resolved. Perhaps the Minister will outline the arguments on definition and say why we cannot have reliable statistics. Such statistics are important. How else can one measure the effectiveness of legislation?

In the previous Parliament, I tabled a question about how often those convicted of murder were actual trigger men for people who placed bombs. I was informed that it was not possible to answer that, because statistics were not available. That is quite incredible. Without such statistics, how can we measure the effectiveness of the security forces and the legal system?

I regret to say that I have the impression that the number of trigger men who are convicted of murder in any one year could probably be counted on the fingers of one hand. If figures were available, they would demonstrate that the system is not as effective as it should be. I fear that such figures as are available give a somewhat false impression.

On the fifth page of the report, Lord Colville discusses the legislation that is designed to deal with terrorist funds. He refers to the position on the Channel islands and on the Isle of Man. He notes that power is available to extend part of the emergency provisions legislation to the islands. He then states:

> "Whatever may be said about the efficacy of section 13 and schedule 4 to the Prevention of Terrorism Act, it must be of direct concern that the fullest possible range of facilities should be to hand for the authorities in those jurisdictions to give such assistance as they can to expose terrorists' off-shore accounts and money laundering."

Two issues arise from that passage. The Prevention of Terrorism Act provisions that operate on some of the islands are much narrower than those in the emergency provisions legislation. Part VII of the EPA deals with the confiscation of the proceeds of terrorists' illegal activities. I think that it is fair to say that the PTA provisions on terrorist funds—the Minister's comments will be interesting—are virtually useless. The EPA provisions may be useful, but the PTA provisions are not. That underlines the need for uniform legislation throughout the British Isles, but excluding the Republic of Ireland.

In the same passage of his report, Lord Colville refers to protection payments and tax. Unfortunately, his comment is wrong. I have personal experience of persons who reported that they were being intimidated by terrorists and were making protection payments. They found that, as a result of taking up the invitation of the previous Secretary of State to report these matters, they were raided by the Inland Revenue, and found themselves in a much worse situation. Lord Colville states that he is not aware of such cases, but unfortunately they exist. His comment is no response to the position of those citizens, who behaved, perhaps at a later date, in a responsible manner.

That brings me to the section of Lord Colville's report which refers to cases of irresponsibility on the part of the television medium. At paragraphs 4.2.9. and 10 he refers to a case that went to court in 1991. The defendant was a man called Gilgunn. A complaint was made by the detainee's mother on his behalf to the Anglo-Irish secretariat alleging serious threats made to him by the police. In the witness box, however, the detainee made no attempt to substantiate the allegation. The judge in the case said:

> "I am satisfied that there is no truth in any suggestion that any threat of this kind was made at any time. I have said previously that Gilgunn was an intelligent young man. He is also, I am satisfied, a manipulative young man."

Lord Colville continues:

> "In the recent Channel 4 documentary programme 'Behind the Walls of Castlereagh', Mr. Gilgunn repeated these allegations. I heard no reference to the comments made by the judge."

The inescapable conclusion is that Gilgunn manufactured the complaint in an attempt to discredit the RUC and that Channel 4 was too gullible. It is not the only time that there has been such gullibility. I recall the notorious "Despatches" programme which alleged the existence of a so-called inner circle in which it was said that police and loyalist terrorists plotted assassinations. What was produced on screen in the way of evidence was singularly unconvincing.

After the programme, in an attempt to bolster their case, those involved in the production of "Despatches" supplied the RUC with names, some of whom they said were members of the inner circle. Some of the names were not even in the RUC, although those involved with "Despatches" said they were. I believe that the RUC is satisfied that none of those named was so involved.

If the programme makers had consulted any reputable journalist operating in Ulster, they would have been told that the allegations were fantasies. Indeed, some journalists working in Northern Ireland are now reluctant to have any dealings with Channel 4 programmers as a result. I understand that the programme cost about £250,000, which is something worth considering.

[Mr. David Trimble]

I suspect that the programme involved more than gullibility. The person who made it was no wide-eyed innocent coming to Ulster for the first time. He was a native of Ulster who in his student days was associated with extreme Republican politics.

If the police succeed in their attempts to compel "Despatches" to disclose its sources, I think that it will be found that essentially that programme had one source—a person who is known to have a Republican political background. We shall then see that the programme was tainted from the outset. The sinister aspect of the programme was that, in addition to smearing the police, it effectively identified members of a mythical inner circle and so targeted individuals in the Loyalist community. That is a dangerous consequence of irresponsibility.

That naturally leads one to the programme earlier this week and the case of Mr. Nelson. Like other hon. Members, I shall suspend judgment on that until we know more of the facts. It illustrates what we do know from what has come out through the courts and elsewhere and underlines the danger of competing organisations in intelligence matters and the danger of not having proper co-ordination and effective control.

I am not drawing any conclusions about what may have happened. It is clear from what we know that Mr. Nelson was or may have been a double agent. It is unwise to conclude that all his actions were controlled by his intelligence handlers, but there is sufficient in the public domain of a reputable nature to show that there is cause for concern.

I appreciate the difficulties of inquiries into intelligence matters, but I should like to be reassured that there will be an investigation into those matters and that as much as possible will be put into the public domain so that we can see where the truth lies. However, as I say, I caution against taking what emanates from Mr. Nelson as gospel because it comes from a tainted source.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) said that the "Panorama" programme, which I am afraid that I did not see, alleged collusion in the importation of arms. If I remember correctly, all the arms that were being imported for the UDA on the occasion to which the hon. Gentleman refers were seized and the majority of the arms destined for the UVF were also found.

Mr. Mallon: Those arms were imported by a group known then as Ulster Resistance. Some of them were handed over to the UDA and some to the UVF. A consignment was seized by the police outside Tandragee and the rest have not been recovered. It has been established that the gun which killed the people in the betting shop was imported in that shipment.

Mr. Trimble: I am aware of that fact. The facts are, as I stated, that all the weapons in that shipment going to the UDA were found. The majority of those going to the UVF were found. It is said that there were some going to another organisation which have not been found. If, as the hon. Gentleman says, the gun used in that terrible attack was found, it could well be from the UVF contingent.

The significance of the situation is that Mr. Nelson was said to be working for the UDA, and all the weapons destined for the UDA were seized by the RUC. I think that there is no dispute about that.

The hon. Gentleman referred critically to a long passage in Lord Colville's report about complaints against the police. At this stage, I shall simply urge hon. Members to read everything that Lord Colville says on that point. He makes a number of cogent points analysing the way in which the system is not working effectively. There is a serious problem here, because of the way in which the civil legal system is being used to give a false impression.

The actions of the authorities on that point—particularly the Northern Ireland Office—are reprehensible. It is wrong to settle those cases. They should be contested unless it is clear that there is wrongdoing by the soldiers and policemen concerned, in which case, by all means settle. But, as I understand it, Lord Colville points out that cases are being settled because the material to defend them is not available. His suggestions are directed towards ensuring that evidence is preserved.

It is wrong to criticise the suggestion that detailed records should be kept when they are kept, for example, on interrogation and patrolling. Anyone who reads the passage concerned will note that Lord Colville makes some cogent points, which probably provide uncomfortable reading for the Northern Ireland Office: they require a positive response and certain changes.

The current IRA bombing campaign has, of course, caused great concern, which has increased significantly over the past year. My own constituency has suffered the effects of three large bombs. One, containing 1,200 lb of home-made explosive, was defused at Banbridge; another, containing over 2,000 lb of HME, destroyed Craigavon RUC station, wrecked a nearby Catholic school and damaged a Catholic church, various community services and hundreds of houses. The third, containing over 1,000 lb of HME, tore the commercial heart out of Lurgan, a town in my constituency.

Following the bombing of the Baltic exchange in London, people in England may have some idea of the effect of such large bombs. The bomb in the City, however, affected modern buildings, and most of the damage—although it was bad at the time—was essentially superficial: the structures remained intact, and the damage can be repaired relatively easily. In Lurgan, two entire blocks with over a dozen different buildings suffered severe structural damage. I do not want to labour the point, but I think it fair to say that immediately afterwards—and, indeed, today—the town resembled scenes from the blitz.

The bombs did not come from nowhere. A large home-made explosive bomb takes time to prepare: fertiliser must be ground up, other ingredients must be bought and mixed in, and the thing must eventually be assembled and primed. Grinding up the fertiliser for a large bomb requires several days' work, which must be done in places where there is apparent freedom from detection or interruption.

I believe that the bombs that went off in my constituency were made up in the IRA safe havens along the south Armagh and Monaghan frontier; I am not sure which side was involved, but that was where they originated. They were not, however, moved up along the length of Armagh, where they might have been intercepted by vehicle checkpoints. It is believed that they were taken

up through the salient in the Irish Republic created by County Monaghan, crossed the frontier into east Tyrone and then moved into north Armagh.

The police in my constituency may sometimes suspect that a bomb is in transit. They then face the impossible task of covering all the likely targets. That, of course, cannot be done; judgment must be exercised, and the defence of some targets prioritised. It is then child's play for the IRA to see which way the police have gone, and to go the other way and hit a target that has apparently been left open. Many believe that that happened in Lurgan. After the event, the hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) mentioned a last-minute reconnaissance car going through the town, and that lends support to their belief.

If that happened, however, I think that it would be wrong to blame the police. As I have said, theirs is an impossible task. The question that should be asked is, why are they given that task? The obvious response must be to go to the source of the bombs, and cut off the movement at that point rather than trying to catch the bombers when they come in. That must focus attention on the frontier areas—not to keep people happy, but to keep people alive and our towns intact.

At this point, we come up against what I regard as a fundamental flaw in the Government's policy: a flaw that has vitiated policy for over a decade, and will continue in the future to render of no avail the sacrifices of soldiers and policemen. The Government believe that they must at all costs have the co-operation of the Irish Republic on the frontier. They have some co-operation, but the truth is that they do not and will not have effective co-operation; effective, in the words of the previous Secretary of State —the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), who I am glad to see is present—to end the use of the border as a resource for terrorism.

I think that a little quiet reflection on the nature and objectives of the Catholic Irish nation will make it clear why that degree of co-operation will not be forthcoming. The necessary job can be done by our British security forces. It will be done when the necessary reassessment of policy has been made. The legislation that we are renewing contains almost all the legal tools necessary for the job. All we need is for Ministers to have the wit and the will to use them well.

10.54 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): I hope not to make the same kind of personal intervention in this debate as I made in the last debate of the previous Session, when the sitting had to be suspended because I was taken ill and had to be examined.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): The hon. Gentleman is worth waiting for.

Mr. Marshall: I am always worth waiting for: that is why the House has been waiting so long.

I thank the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) for being brief. I know that he wanted to make more points if time had been available. I thank him for leaving enough time for the Minister of State and me to reply to the debate.

I should like to reinforce one of the points that the hon. Member for Upper Bann made. He claimed that Lord Colville's conclusion in paragraph 2.1.5 is incorrect. The paragraph refers to anecdotal stories of employers co-operating with the authorities, who would then attract the attention of the Inland Revenue and Customs. Lord Colville says, quite clearly and categorically, that there is no factual basis for that fear. What the hon. Member told the House a few moments ago is completely contrary to that conclusion, so I should like to hear the Government's view.

It feels as though we started the debate a long time ago. I regret that the Secretary of State is not here—that is not a criticism—as I wanted to thank him for taking us so clearly and succinctly through the order, and for the overview he gave of the security situation in the Province in the past 12 months.

If I had been Secretary of State, I would have felt some trepidation, because this must be the first occasion in recent years when the Secretary of State had his two immediate predecessors hovering in the shadows. I should like to think that they were here to give him moral support. I am sure they were, but perhaps they were here also to ensure that he stayed on the straight and narrow and trod the path that was so well laid out by them.

It was a delight to me, and I am sure to the House, to see the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) acting as Parliamentary Private Secretary, conveying information from the Box to the Minister of State. I hope that he does not intend again to seek a ministerial career, which he gave up recently.

The Secretary of State went through the customary practice of congratulating Lord Colville on the review. Perhaps I may enter a counter-view. There is a growing view in the Province—clearly not a majority view—that perhaps Lord Colville has passed his sell-by-date. It is felt that, regrettably, he has not introduced the reforms that were suggested in previous reports. We certainly regret that he feels that there is no point in advocating changes that the Government have already rejected. That relates to a point made by a number of hon. Members—in previous years, Lord Colville has argued for televised recordings which were refused by the Government, and it is unfortunate that he has not reiterated that suggestion.

We welcome the Secretary of State's words about the close and growing co-operation between the security forces north and south of the border. The co-operation shows an increasing willingness and desire by the United Kingdom and the Irish Governments to ensure that terrorism does not succeed, and co-operation will increase in order to bring about that state of affairs.

We also welcome the time limits set for prisoners on remand. I realise that it is on a non-statutory basis at the moment, and although we welcome it, it should not be too long before the system is placed on a statutory basis.

We agree that it is essential to pursue social and economic policies to enhance the lives of all the citizens of Northern Ireland. I only wish that the Secretary of State had the necessary freedom to introduce policies that would increase the living standard for the people there, but I strongly suspect that the curbs on public expenditure that are likely to take place in Great Britain will also impinge on citizens in Northern Ireland. Instead of an improvement in living standards, there will be a standstill.

We share the Secretary of State's view that there is a need for a political settlement in the Province. Despite all

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that has been said, until there is a clear political settlement which is seen to be fair to all the citizens of the Province, the good will shown by the Governments and politicians from both sides of the divide will come to naught. There must be a political settlement which is seen to be fair and non-discriminatory and one in which all citizens of the Province feel that they are equal in a social, political and economic sense.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Marshall: No, I will not. The hon. Gentleman came in at 10.45 pm and has missed a great deal of the debate.

Mr. Porter: I came in at 10.40 pm.

Mr. Marshall: I apologise. I tend to exaggerate occasionally, but I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree that it would be unfair to give way to him, as that would take time from the Minister.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) gave us his usual views, and I am sure that the House was grateful to receive them yet again. He referred to a certain gentleman, whose name I forget, not knowing what was going on behind closed doors at Stormont. He tantalisingly hinted that he knew, and I thought for one moment that he was going to share his knowledge with the House so that not only he and Ministers but all hon. Members could share his knowledge of any progress being made in Stormont. I was extremely disappointed that the hon. Member for Antrim, North, who is usually loquacious, did not go on to give us that information.

I do not often agree with the hon. Member for Antrim, North, although we disagree in a gentlemanly way. However, I agree with two points that he made, and I certainly agreed when he said that it should be made clear to the terrorists and their apologists that they cannot bomb and murder their way to the conference table. He certainly has the Labour party's support on that, and I would guess that he has that of every right hon. and hon. Member.

I also agree with the hon. Member for Antrim, North —he shares the view of the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis)—that there should be a visual record at the Castlereagh holding centre to assist the police and to help to refute allegations made against them. That alone will make it easier for the authorities to refute allegations and prevent people of violence from being able to use those allegations to undermine public confidence in the security forces.

When the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone talks about the need to curb racketeering and close off funds to terrorists, he has the House's full support. In speaking of the need for police primacy, not just in theory but in practice, he again echoes a view repeatedly expressed by the Opposition. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) has occasionally been unfairly criticised for persisting in putting that view.

The hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) said that Lord Colville had drawn attention to complaints about ill treatment at holding centres. He then said that the disquiet arising from those matters needed to be eliminated. If that is the hon. Gentleman's view, why did not he suggest the next logical step: to introduce recording equipment into those centres so that there would be a visual record to help in refuting most of those allegations? I was a little disappointed that the hon. Gentleman picked up a point made by Lord Colville but did not then take the next logical step.

In a succinct—perhaps a euphemism for brief—speech, the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) asserted that the reintroduction of internment would be counter-productive. We agree that it would be a recruiting sergeant for terrorists in the Province. He then asked why the Labour party was voting against the renewal order this evening. There is not time adequately to answer that question now—*[Laughter.]* If those hon. Members who laugh at that assertion read in detail the Second Reading debate last year, they will see all the constructive criticisms that we made about the legislation in Committee, on Report and on Third Reading. They will then realise that we had sound and valid reasons for opposing it, and the necessary changes have still not been made to it.

I shall name but two of our objections to the legislation: first, the question of internment remaining on the statute book; and, secondly, the power to seize documents—a matter that is even dearer to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East. If the hon. and learned Gentleman reads those debates——

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I shall make a point of doing so.

Mr. Marshall: I am delighted that the hon. and learned Gentleman will find time. I just wish that Conservative Members would avail themselves of the same opportunity.

In the few minutes remaining to me, I shall make one general political point. The debate has shown that, although we may hold differing views on the efficacy of the emergency provisions legislation, all Members and parties are united in our determination that terrorism will not succeed. Political change must be brought about through the democratic process, not by the power to bomb and murder. No one can bomb their way to the conference table.

We all recognise the difficult and dangerous work undertaken by the RUC and the security forces. On behalf of my party, I pay tribute to them for their bravery and steadfastness. We must never forget that, in the battle against terrorism, the security forces are there to protect citizens' lives, not to place them at risk; to protect individual freedom, not to undermine it; and to uphold the rule of law, not subvert it. There is no doubt in my mind that in most instances those high ideals are upheld, but when they are not, the consequences provide succour to the terrorists and make the job of the security forces that much more difficult. It is in all our interests that, in the defeat of terrorism, no corners are cut and no laws deliberately broken.

Finally, let me make our position absolutely clear: we intend to force a Division on the order, and I urge support from all quarters of the House.

11.11 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Michael Mates): I warmly endorse the penultimate words of the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall). We entirely agree with everything that he said about the necessity for the forces to act honestly within the law and

evenhandedly. I congratulate him on, for the large part, a moderate and sensible speech. I hope that my saying so from here will not damage his credibility, but we find little to quarrel with in most of what he said. The hon. Gentleman has a problem and he was honest enough to say that he did not intend to explain to us tonight what it was. That is why he is urging his colleagues not to support the order.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) started down that road, using a slightly different tack from usual—but then he has been known to change his fig leaf from time to time. Although he produced a different fig leaf this time, that is to say that he could not support the order because inherent in it remained powers of detainment—not an argument that has been in the forefront of his reasons for opposing the measure in the past—the order does nothing of the sort. The power of detention, or internment as he called it, is not dealt with in the order and could not be brought into force without our coming to the House for an affirmative order. Therefore, that reason is even less valid than usual.

In looking to what I hope is mainstream thinking that would command support in both Houses, one can do no better than quote the words of Lord Mason in the last debate in the other place. He spoke for many people when he said:

"Unfortunately the circumstances are such within the United Kingdom that some liberty must be sacrificed in the defence of liberty, insidious though that may be. It is the price that must be paid in defence of our democracy . . . Nothing gives the IRA more joy and some encouragement than to see a divided House, and especially the image created by some within Parliament of seeming to be too protective of the terrorists and their political allies, rather than wishing their destruction."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 13 February 1989; Vol. 504, c. 33-4.]

That used to be the words of the mainstream Labour party and I long for the day when it is so again.

Tonight's debate has enabled the House to examine once again the requirement for, and the scope of, the emergency powers now in effect in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Winnick: I listened with care to the Minister's quotation from Lord Mason, who has a point of view, even if it is not one shared by us. The Minister gave the impression, at least, that the Opposition display some softness towards terrorism. He will know of our loathing and hatred for terrorists on both sides of the sectarian divide, not least for the Provisional IRA, whose members have for 22 years committed the worst type of crime, as I said in my intervention in the speech by the Secretary of State. Will the Minister therefore reconsider and recognise that, although there are genuine differences of opinion, there is no difference of opinion in the House when it comes to condemning the crimes and atrocities that have been perpetrated, some of which have occurred in the past six months?

Mr. Mates: I acknowledge unreservedly that that is the view of the hon. Gentleman, and I have never questioned that. But some Labour Members entertain these people —they have brought them over to the mainland and into this House. For as long as that happens, it will be perfectly reasonable to point it out.

I welcome the scrutiny that we have given the measure tonight. It is entirely right, in a parliamentary democracy such as ours, that there should be full and open debate on the need for exceptional powers such as these. In that regard, I must say that I do not share the view expressed by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) that our annual debates are no more than a ritual. It is because we examine the legislation every year, because changes are made in the light of experience and because we continue to draw on the independent advice of people such as Lord Colville that they are not a ritual but a real event, and I am glad that they take place—inconvenient though that may be for some of us.

The Government's aim is a full return to normality and the eradication of terrorism in Northern Ireland. That is our first priority. Terrorist organisations are criminal conspiracies, representing perhaps the most dangerous threat to the fabric of any democratic society. We are determined that they will not prevail. Violence in pursuit of political ends is neither acceptable nor inevitable and for so long as it continues terrorism will be met with a firm, resolute and proactive response.

Within that basic approach, however, it is open to the Government—indeed, it is incumbent on them—to introduce specific measures and powers, where the ordinary law is insufficient, to enable the police and Army to deal with the particular difficulties that they encounter in protecting society from terrorism and apprehending the perpetrators of it. The Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 and the relevant sections of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 also being renewed by the order do precisely that.

We have had a wide-ranging and interesting debate, and I shall be dealing with some of the points raised by hon. Members in such time as I have. Before I do so, however, it may be worth illustrating the practical application of the emergency provisions Act measures by examining one particular case—the refurbishment of a number of permanent vehicle checkpoints. The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) made some valuable points based on his considerable experience of these matters, and I promise him that I will consider them carefully.

The permanent vehicle checkpoints in border areas provide protection for communities particularly vulnerable to terrorist attack. They deter terrorists by controlling cross-border traffic. They block key escape routes used by terrorists and they provide bases for security force patrols working in dangerous areas.

Following a thorough review, 10 permanent vehicle checkpoints in Fermanagh and Londonderry are being refurbished and improved. In some cases, they are being moved a short distance to more operationally suitable sites. The upgrading programme, which began in south-east Fermanagh, is designed to reduce inconvenience to local communities by improving traffic handling arrangements as well as to provide better protection and improved accommodation for security force personnel at the bases.

The entire exercise provides an example of how powers provided for in one part of the Act can be used to ameliorate the impact of the operation of others of its powers. We recognise the disruption caused to local people by the necessary use at the checkpoints of the powers to stop and question people for so long as is necessary to ascertain their identities, movements and any knowledge that they may have of recent terrorist incidents, and to search vehicles under sections 23 and 26 of the Act.

Part of the refurbishment programme is intended to reduce or remove the lengthy traffic queues that can build

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up by redesigning or resiting the PVCPs, providing space for controlled bypasses and lay-bys where inquiries and searches can, where necessary, be made without delaying other traffic. The necessary land is, in a number of cases, being acquired using powers contained in section 24 of the Act, and compensation is being paid under section 63. Work is still in progress, but I understand that the new arrangements for the finished checkpoints have proved much more acceptable to local communities. The repositioning of some checkpoints may also allow the reopening of one or two minor roads in the south Fermanagh area. The Irish security forces have been providing necessary security for the operation on their side of the border and their assistance has been greatly appreciated.

I turn now briefly, I am afraid, to some of the points that have been made during the debate. Reference has been made to videotape recording. Of course we acknowledge that there is genuine concern about the interview procedures. I know that that is a difficult subject and I have made it my business early in my new incarnation to go to Castlereagh. I have been right round the course that a detained person goes round and I have seen every aspect that that person goes through. I have also seen the controls and checks intended to ensure that there is no ill-treatment.

There is provision for medical inspection as soon as the detained person arrives and for a log to be opened to show where that person is at every moment of the day and night. Every time the person is taken out of the cell, even to go to the lavatory, and is returned to it, that is recorded. Whenever that person is taken to an interview room, that is recorded by someone who is not involved in the investigation. That is an imporant safeguard. The people who carry out that part of the handling of a detained person are uniformed members of the RUC. All the time that someone is being interviewed in an interview room, that is monitored by a uniformed police inspector who is not part of the investigation team.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) wanted to know whether we could go even further than that and provide a record. We have obviously considered that. However, there are difficulties which do not simply relate to the difficulties in obtaining a confession. It is important that people should understand that.

There are difficulties in that some people who belong to terrorist organisations will have their lives and the lives of their families put at risk if they so much as talk to the authorities. That is why many of them adopt a policy of silence to start with. That is visible to the inspecting officer and to the inspector who is present. If a recording of the tape became available even showing that the detained person had opened his or her mouth—never mind whether to make a confession—perhaps just to ask the time of day, there are fears that that person, his friends or relations could be in danger from the terrorists who would suspect——

Mr. Rupert Allason *rose*——

Mr. McNamara *rose*——

Mr. Mates: I am sorry, I will not give way as I have only a very short time left. I am trying to reply to the debate.

That is why the Chief Constable and those who advise us have concluded that it would not be right to move further at the moment. However, I happily give the undertaking that we will continue to monitor the situation. We do not want those who are detained to be able to sue us afterwards. That makes no sense. However, so long as there are real dangers and when life might be at stake, we must take the cautious view.

The hon. Members for Kingston upon Hull, North and for Antrim, North referred to out-of-court settlements. Lord Colville makes it clear that many of those actions cover a portmanteau of complaints and that in those that include an allegation of assault that claim is very often not substantiated or pursued. The police authority is now analysing civil action settlements to determine in how many cases the settlement relates to a claim of assault and in how many to some procedural error. The results of that study will be made public.

The House may be interested in one example cited by Lord Colville. The plaintiff alleged false imprisonment, wrongful arrest and assault. The police contested the claim, and the assault claim was not accepted by the court, but compensation was paid for overholding—that is, for holding him for too long. The plaintiff was delayed for 45 minutes while a doctor was called to make a final medical examination. Those are some of the problems that we are up against in settling out of court, and they have nothing to do with ill-treatment.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North complained about Crumlin Road and delays on remand. I hope that he is as pleased as others have been with the announcement that we really are seeking to tackle the problem by administrative means, and I repeat my right hon. and learned Friend's assurance that we will not be satisfied with a year's limit if we can bring it down further.

As to the conditions in Crumlin Road, I have visited that prison myself, although I did so voluntarily and not as a guest of the governor. There are some difficult accommodation problems there. It is an old Victorian prison in the middle of the city. The governor, the staff and the prison department in the Northern Ireland Office are making herculean attempts to put that right, but it is inevitably a fairly slow process.

Mention was made by several hon. Members of the independent assessor. His terms of reference will be published when they reach fruition. Of course, that information will be given to the House at the appropriate time.

Legislation, no matter how well-focused and appropriate, is effective only when it is properly enforced. I am pleased to report to the House that the vigorous and impartial actions of the police and Army are bringing real results. The level of security force activity is very high. In addition to the numerous patrols mounted by the RUC, the Army currently undertakes 250 to 300 patrols per day, day in and day out in the Province. For that it should be thanked. That very high figure should be put into perspective when the inevitable but fortunately rare occurrence of improper action by the security forces takes so much of the headlines. It is in the context of 300 or more patrols of young professional soldiers and police going out in fear of their lives day after day that we get the odd regrettable incident. But there is one way in which that can be stopped at once, and that is for the terrorists to stop their deadly business. There would then be no further need for Army or police patrols.

Last year, more than twice as many people were charged with murder as in 1990. Adjustments to force structures and deployments to meet the evolving threat continue to be made where appropriate. Reference has already been made to the establishment of the new post of Deputy Chief Constable (Operations), and I note the wide welcome that that has received in the House. Recruitment of the additional 441 police officers, which was announced last November, continues. For example, an additional 104 regular officers and 40 reservists were recruited during May alone.

Although I welcome the appointment of the Deputy Chief Constable, I do not want anybody to think that there will be an immediate panacea as a result of it. We are hoping, as the terrorists' tactics evolve and change, to evolve and change the structures whereby the control and co-ordination of all the security forces takes place. Having a senior policeman clearly in charge of all operations of the police and the Army is, I hope everyone will agree, a step in the right direction.

Our commitment to the defeat of terrorism is undiminished. I hope that that message is getting through to the terrorists on both sides. There are some small signs that it is. Whether it is or not, the security forces will continue their relentless pursuit of the criminals. The emergency powers continued by this order are vital to enabling them to carry out that task. In that context, we would all agree with the valuable contribution by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). It is on that basis and not with any pleasure, of which some accused us, but with reluctance and determination that I commend the order to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 281, Noes 170.

Division No. 30] **[11.29 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek

Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and Mr.Timothy Boswell.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nicholas
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, James
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, William
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Michael
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ms Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Khabra, Piara
Kilfoyle, Peter
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Tipping, Paddy
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wright, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 19th May, be approved.

Prison (Liverpool, Walton)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

11.41 pm

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): The debate concerns a basic dispute between my constituents and the Home Office about the proposal for a new prison in Fazakerley. The need for that prison is based on a projected prison population of 57,000 in the year 2000. In the past few years, the prison population has dropped from 51,000 to 47,000. Notwithstanding those fluctuations, on 3 June, a Home Office spokeswoman said in the *Liverpool Daily Post and Echo*:

"The underlying trend means there will be more and more people in our jails."

The real problem is the admission of failure by the Home Office of its prison policy and the failure of the sentencing policy pursued by the courts. One in four prisoners are on remand, awaiting trial or sentence. Only one in three prisoners are in gaol for a crime relating to violence, sex or drugs. That prompts the obvious question: Why do we have so many people in our gaols? Why do we gaol more people than any other European country? Before we start talking about increasing our prison capacity, we must address those questions.

No one disputes the need for accommodation for the burgeoning prison population. No one disputes that any civilised society needs to provide some humane form of incarceration given that that is the punishment for so many of our crimes. However, why was it decided, within the past two weeks, to dust off a plan to build a new category B prison in Fazakerley in my constituency? We thought that that plan had been shelved 18 months ago. Now, the director general of the prison service, Joe Pilling, feels able to declare that the proposed site is "an ideal place"—without, to my knowledge, ever having visited it or considered its many drawbacks.

I can only assume that there is some sort of vindictiveness. It is certainly not the NIMBY syndrome affecting people in Walton or in Liverpool, because my constituency already has the largest prison of its kind in the country. There is a young persons unit at Dyson Hall and a special unit at Ashwell hospital two miles up the road. It is hardly a case of people who do not have prisons in their area complaining about one being built there. We are overloaded with prisons. I recall—I apologise in advance if I am incorrect—that the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd), was prominent in his constituency in a campaign against a remand centre.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Kilfoyle: I withdraw that, although I thought that the Minister was involved in that campaign. The Minister will not face in his constituency the problems that we face in mine, because the nearest prison to Fareham is the deportee prison in Gosport. He does not have the two and a half prisons that we have on our doorstep.

I am concerned that a disproportionate number of prisoners will be located in my constituency. It is as if we have been targeted as the refuse dump for the flotsam and jetsam of society. If the prison proposal is implemented, I compute that that area of north Liverpool could have up to 6 per cent. of the prison population. That is a wholly disproportionate number of prisoners to locate in any one part of the country and they will be within a two-mile radius of Fazakerley. That is in addition to the madcap announcement that negotiations are taking place between the Home Office and Mersey Docks and Harbour Company and Merseyside development corporation about prison ships in the Mersey docks. That is incredible and would turn Liverpool into a virtual penal colony, a latter-day Botany bay.

Ms. Angela Eagle (Wallasey): Does my hon. Friend agree that this debate is timely, in that it is being held just days after the Minister confirmed in a letter to me that he is actively investigating the possibility of siting prison ships on the Mersey, possibly in Wallasey docks? He stated that a suitable accommodation vessel has already been identified by the Home Office and that preliminary talks about a suitable berth have been held with the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company. Does my hon. Friend also agree that floating prisons are not the answer to the current crisis in prison accommodation? That crisis vividly illustrates the Government's abject failure to deal with the crime explosion or to plan——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Lady is a new Member and I hesitate to intervene, but an intervention must not be a speech.

Ms. Eagle: I accept that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have one final question for my hon. Friend. Will he join me in demanding that the Government respect the views of local people and abandon these Dickensian plans to create an Alcatraz on the Mersey?

Mr. Kilfoyle: I agree with all that my hon. Friend says. As I have said, Merseyside is being targeted as the country's No. 1 prison centre—I know not why. Perhaps the Minister will tell us how the Government deal with such matters regionally. Why must there be such a concentration in one small part of our region to deal with a large catchment area and a large number of prisoners in the north-west?

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the people in Knowsley, and especially those in the Fazakerley end of my constituency, agree entirely with his opposition in the past, in this debate and in future to the development of another prison on the Fazakerley hospital site? I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) agrees.

Mr. Kilfoyle: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support, which is shared by all parties and all sections of the community in our part of the world. We have a rare unanimity of view on the proposal. We believe that it is entirely alien to the needs of the area.

I am aware that a shortage of prison accommodation has resulted in prisoners being kept in police cells, but on 9 June—only two days ago—only 71 prisoners were held in police cells on Merseyside. How does that justify investment in a 600-prisoner category B prison? If it reduces the burden in other parts of the country, it will add to Merseyside's burden.

Mr. Eddie O'Hara (Knowskey, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that a similar proposal was made only a couple of years ago? The good citizens of Knowsley, both north and south, were consulted and they expressed their

[Mr. Eddie O'Hara]

views clearly. They were against the proposal. They are highly indignant that, so soon after they expressed their opinion, the proposal has been resurrected.

Mr. Kilfoyle: This is the third attempt in three years, I believe, to site a prison on the north side of Liverpool. As my hon. Friend has said, there was a successful campaign in 1988, as I recall, that prevented a similar prison being built in Bootle. Local opposition stymied that proposal. As I have said, it was only 18 months ago that we thought that the proposal that is the subject of the debate had been consigned to the dustbin.

It is not merely a matter of building another prison on the north side of Liverpool. Where have the people in the Home Office chosen to site it? It would be the length of a cricket pitch away from Fazakerley hospital, which is a large tower block. People recovering from major surgery would be looking down on a floodlit exercise yard. I can assume only that the Home Office has thought of a new form of therapy in conjunction with the Secretary of State for Health. I cannot see the presence of a prison being conducive to the recovery of patients in the Fazakerley hospital. They would find themselves looking at a huge security wall, and those on the upper floors would be looking down into the courtyard of the prison.

Fazakerley hospital is part of the Aintree hospital trust, and the Merseyside regional health authority was in the vanguard of the hospitals that decided to opt out following the introduction of the Government's so-called reforms. In this instance, however, we are at one with the trust because there has been a long-term plan to develop Fazakerley hospital as a centre of excellence along the lines of St. James's hospital in Leeds. That ambition will be thwarted at a stroke by the proposal to build a prison immediately alongside the hospital.

There were alternative offers for the site. A company called AMEC was pre-empted by the Home Office after it had offered £3·5 million to the regional health authority to buy the site and develop it. It would have been developed in conjunction with developments on the hospital site. It was hoped that there would be auxiliary industries to the hospital along with mixed housing and secondary developments. That was not to be. The Home Office took the site and the proposed development fell by the wayside, but that development still exists as an option, especially if the Home Office were to relent.

I understand that the contractor for the Home Office project is to be Mowlem. I am sure that the Minister will correct me if it is not the case that Mowlem is involved with a rather dubious sounding organisation, Correction Corporation of America, which is attempting to run privatised prisons in the United Kingdom. Does the Minister envisage, as one of the options, a privatised prison on the site, if the project were to go ahead?

If arguments that are based on the number of prisoners in the area and on the inappropriateness of the site have no effect on the Minister, surely he should heed the extent of the opposition that has been expressed by local people. He must take some cognisance of the wide range of individuals and organisations that have come together on the issue.

It is to be expected that my hon. Friends and I would be at one, but the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) has given us his full support. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), a Liberal Democrat, has given us his verbal support. We have the support of the Liverpool, Sefton and Knowsley district councils, which are all vehemently opposed to the proposal, as are the Aintree trust, the Merseyside police authority, the South Sefton magistrates, the Churches and, most importantly, the people.

A telephone poll, commissioned by the local paper, unscientific though that may be, showed that 96 per cent. of those contacted were against the prison and 4 per cent. were undecided.

The proposal has nothing to offer the residents of the area. It has nothing to offer the people of Merseyside or Liverpool. It is a foolish proposition. I hope that men and women of good sense and good will can come together, look at the matter afresh and see that it is in no one's interests.

Therefore, I invite the Minister to come to see for himself what it would be like to be in the tower block looking out on a prison and to meet the various people who have expressed support for our opposition to the scheme—reasonable people, who refuse to countenance an unreasonable project.

11.55 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I congratulate the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) on his good fortune in securing the debate and making a most effective maiden Adjournment speech.

I can well understand why he sought this opportunity to debate the proposal to build a new prison on a site at Fazakerley in his constituency. Any such plan is bound to create misgivings locally, and he has powerfully represented his constituents' doubts and fears, which I can well understand. I am grateful to him for providing me with this opportunity to explain the background to the planning application which the prison service recently made to Liverpool city council on the scheme.

I should begin by explaining briefly how the prison service came to select the site for a new prison. The site was identified in 1988 after a very thorough survey of sites in the north west. That covered some 40 sites in various parts of the region. The site at Fazakerley is particularly well suited to the prison service's needs, and in particular offered a rare opportunity to acquire a site in an urban area which was readily accessible but which was at a distance from any private housing.

Having identified the site, the prison service began negotiations with its owners, the regional health authority, and opened discussions with Liverpool city council about the development of the site.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lloyd: I shall not because I have a lot to say. If there is time towards the end, I shall let the hon. Gentleman intervene.

In May 1989, the prison service made a formal application to Liverpool city council, and at that time there were full consultations with the general public as well as the council. In September 1989, however, the city council decided to object.

By then, there were already some signs that the prison population had begun to fall and that fall continued in 1990. From a peak of almost 50,000 in 1988, the prison

population fell sharply to 45,600 in 1990. The fall of 3,000 prisoners between 1989 and 1990 was the largest absolute fall in the prison population since 1915. A fall of that size obviously made it necessary for the service to review the prison estate and, in particular, the likely need for new prisons.

It became clear that, on the projections at that time, there was unlikely to be a need for a new prison at Fazakerley in the next few years, and in November 1990, it was announced that we were not proposing to proceed with the project. Early in 1991, my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold), reviewed the sites which the prison service had earmarked for new prisons, and in March 1991 wrote to the hon. Gentleman's predecessor, Eric Heffer, to let him know that the site at Fazakerley was to be sold.

But in the past year or so, the prison population has started to rise again. Having fallen to 45,000 on a seasonally adjusted basis between September 1990 and March 1991, it rose to 48,000 in April 1992. We now have 1,400 more people in custody than we had a year ago. So far, the rise in the prison population has not been as sharp as the preceding fall, but we have needed to look again at our projections of the future prison population. Recently, the Home Office has published projections of long-term trends in the prison population, which suggest that, in the mid-1990s, there are likely to be between 50,000 and 52,000 people in prison, and by the end of the century more than 57,000.

Although uncertainty is inevitably attached to any long-term projections, they are based on a thorough analysis of the trends, taking account of a wide range of factors, including demography and measures to divert offenders from custody.

Mr. George Howarth: So far, the Minister has based his case on two factors: the recent rise in the prison population, and the proximity of the proposed development to private housing. Will he also take into account the considerable amount of council and housing association property in the vicinity? Not only is there a good deal of private housing in the general area; there is a good deal of residential housing in the immediate area.

Mr. Lloyd: There is never a perfect site. It is entirely unsuitable for a prison to be sited far away from any central population. If an urban area is involved, there are always difficulties, but I think that the hon. Gentleman will accept that private and council residential housing is not particularly close to the site, and that it is a surprisingly suitable site, given its urban surroundings.

Mr. Wareing: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lloyd: I will, because I said earlier that I would, but as a result I shall not have time to complete my own remarks.

Mr. Wareing: My hon. Friends are quite right. The Sparrow Hall estate, in my constituency, is well within a mile of the proposed prison.

My point, however, is that the Government's proposal affects another Government Department. What consultation has the Minister had with the Aintree hospital trust and the South Sefton community health council? The proposal is most objectionable: sick people in the Fazakerley hospital will face a prison just across a narrow road, and that is bound not to improve their health.

Mr. Lloyd: Of course we have had discussions with the health authorities. That is why the hospital is being landscaped as it is. There is no particular problem in prisons being sited near hospitals: Wormwood Scrubs and the Hammersmith hospital provide an example. It is possible for such institutions to function close to each other if they are sensibly designed and if the landscaping is good, and that is what we intend in this instance.

Against that background, we are looking again at the need for new prisons. No firm decisions have yet been made about when work will start. Too often in the past, however, the prison service has found itself unable to respond quickly to the pressure imposed on it, because it has not had sites for new prisons that it could develop rapidly. We are determined that that should not happen again.

Mr. Kilfoyle: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lloyd: No, I will not. I have very little time left, and the hon. Gentleman has raised a good many points.

Mr. Kilfoyle: What about the visit?

Mr. Lloyd: When I am in the area, I shall make a point of looking at the prison, but I give no undertaking to do so in the near future. As the hon. Gentleman himself suggested, the director general of the prison service will be visiting the site in the near future, and I shall certainly hear his report when he comes back.

Our forecasts suggest that there will be a particular need for new places in the north-west——

Mr. Howarth: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman keeps interrupting me. I have been asked a number of questions, and I am trying to present the whole picture. The hon. Gentleman knows very well that time for an Adjournment debate is limited, and more than a quarter of an hour—more than half the time—has been taken by the hon. Member for Walton and several of his hon. Friends, who have interrupted. I have no objection to those interventions, although I was not asked, but I consider it reasonable, when I have allowed interventions, for me to be allowed to conclude in my own way.

There are particular needs for new places in the north-west. Against that background, the prison service recently made a fresh application to Liverpool city council for the construction of a 600-place secure prison on the Fazakerley site. The hon. Member for Walton argued that there is no justification for reviving the proposal to build the prison, but we expect the prison population to increase rapidly.

I shall skip over a number of points because of the interruptions, but the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms. Eagle) spoke about using floating detention centres as a temporary measure. Prisoners being held in police cells are a major problem throughout the country, but it is particularly acute in the north-west. There are 97 prisoners in Liverpool bridewell, which is unsuitable for holding prisoners for any length of time. We are considering every possible short-term measure to relieve police cells of prisoners, including floating detention centres. Again, no decision has been taken on whether we should have them or where they should be.

The hon. Member for Walton argued that it is unjustifiable at any time to site a new prison at Fazakerley,

[Mr. Lloyd]

and that the prison service should look elsewhere in the north-west or somewhere else in the country to meet its needs.

The prison service looked widely in the north-west before identifying the Fazakerley site. A wide range of factors must be met in choosing a site for a new prison. The site must be large enough. A modern prison for 600 inmates needs at least 35 acres. We tried to avoid sites near enough to affect houses, schools and places of worship detrimentally, since there are likely to be particularly strong objections to a prison in those neighbourhoods. We looked for a site that could meet the shortfall in places in particular parts of the country.

Finally, we looked for a site that is readily accessible to visitors, which, as anyone who has read the Woolf report will know, is a most important factor. We attach great importance to this factor as part of our commitment to helping prisoners maintain family relationships. Too often in the past the prison service has been driven to use sites for prisons that are remote and where visits by families burden them with long and wearisome journeys. Labour Members are arguing that the prison should be sited so far away that family relationships could not be maintained.

Fazakerley meets this and other criteria for new prisons. Transport in the area is good.

Mr. Kilfoyle: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lloyd: No.

Mr. Kilfoyle: It is a small point.

Mr. Lloyd: They are small points. If I have time before I finish, I shall give way.

The hon. Member for Walton argued that there is no need for additional accommodation in the Liverpool area, as Her Majesty's prison, Liverpool has difficulty in filling its remand wing from the local catchment area. We do not envisage Fazakerley taking adult remand prisoners. It would be used to provide training places for adult males, and would thereby reduce the number of sentenced prisoners at Liverpool.

At present, disproportionate numbers of sentenced prisoners must be held at Liverpool because there are insufficient training places in the north-west. The remaining 300 places in the prison would be used for young men on remand and would relieve pressures at Hindley, which currently takes young men on remand from a wide area of the north-west, including Merseyside and north Wales, which is unsatisfactory.

Hindley is habitually overcrowded and, at present, about 100 young men who would otherwise be in Hindley are held in police cells. The opening of a new establishment in Lancaster early next year will ease some of the pressures at Hindley, but there will, in our view, still be considerable pressures there which must be eased.

The hon. Gentleman also argued that there are already too many institutions serving the criminal justice system in the area, such as the prison at Walton, the secure hospital at Park Lane and Dyson Hall assessment centre, but the prison is more than a mile from the site of Fazakerley, Park Lane is about four miles, and even the assessment centre is a considerable distance from the boundary of the secure zone of the prison.

The hon. Gentleman also argued that the prison would be too close to Fazakerley general hospital and that the hospital would overlook the prison. We held discussions with the regional health authority about that and have agreed with its arrangements for landscaping the boundary between the hospital and the proposed prison. We believe that the screening will ensure that the hospital is not adversely affected. I do not accept the argument that there would be too many institutions in that part of Liverpool. In any case, it would be virtually impossible to find locations for prisons in an urban area if they had to be near neither institutions nor housing.

One hon. Gentleman said that floodlighting would disturb patients in the hospital. In fact, the prison would be lit only to the normal level of street lighting. The prison service has made it clear that it intends to be a good neighbour in Liverpool. Not only will there be economic benefits from a new prison—an investment of about £80 million in construction and, thereafter, opportunities for about 300 jobs, many to be filled by people recruited locally—but the prison service is conscious of its responsibilities——

Mr. George Howarth: The Minister should visit the site.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman should also visit prisons around the country to see that it is possible to have a prison in an urban area——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock on Wednesday evening, and the debate having continued for half an hour MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at eleven minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 11 June 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

PRICES'S PATENT CANDLE COMPANY LIMITED BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

ULSTER BANK BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Read a Second time, and committed.

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS (No. 2) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Wednesday 17 June at Seven o'clock.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (GREEN PARK) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (JUBILEE) BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 18 June.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Growth Rates

1. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many G7 countries will have had a lower average annual rate of growth than the United Kingdom between 1979 and 1992, using the latest International Monetary Fund forecast for 1992.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Michael Portillo): None. But between 1981 and 1991, of the G7 countries, only Japan had a substantially higher average annual rate of growth than the United Kingdom.

Ms. Quin: The Minister confirms that the answer is none. Given the low rate of growth that we have experienced since 1979, despite North sea oil, the current weak levels of investment and our record balance of payments problem, how do the Government expect us to obtain increased, long-term and sustainable growth in future years?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Lady misinterprets my answer. She chose her years carefully to obtain the answer, but she knows that during the 1980s the United Kingdom had a good rate of growth. Between 1981 and 1989, we had eight years of growth averaging more than 3 per cent. a year, and between 1980 and 1990 our rate of growth was faster than that of Germany, France and Italy. By comparison, in the 1960s and the 1970s, we were at the bottom of the league. There is no reason why we should not get back to those high levels of growth.

Mr. Horam: My right hon. Friend is undoubtedly right about the growth rates in the mid-1980s. Does he agree, however, that if we are to return to those growth rates he must, first, cut interest rates further and, secondly, severely restrain the growth in public expenditure—and I mean severely? What are my right hon. Friend's policies in that regard?

Mr. Portillo: I am sure that what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has been able to do in bringing down interest rates from 15 to 10 per cent. is an important precondition for recovery. My hon. Friend is right to say that it is important that we should fulfil our pledge to reduce our public spending as a proportion of gross domestic product and, in the medium-term, to eliminate our borrowing. Those are important economic objectives.

Mr. William Ross: If, as the Minister says, a decrease in interest rates is a precondition for recovery, when does he expect to fulfil that precondition and substantially decrease interest rates?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman is being less than fair about recent events. Since the autumn of 1990 interest rates have been reduced on nine separate occasions and they have fallen from 15 to 10 per cent. That is an important change and it is an important precondition for recovery.

Mr. David Martin: Will my right hon. Friend give me his judgment on the prospects for economic growth and confidence if the Opposition's policies had been put into effect after the general election?

Madam Speaker: Order. The Minister has no responsibility for that scenario.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Chief Secretary accept that, in view of today's disappointing Confederation of British Industry survey on sales, an apparent post-election recovery has petered out already? Surely, given the continuing malaise in the economy and the constantly rising levels of unemployment and bankruptcies, action must be taken by the Government to stimulate the economy with an early cut in interest rates, such as has been advocated by the chief economist of the Bank of England.

Mr. Portillo: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has possibly not yet had the time to study what the CBI distributive trades survey shows. It shows a strong improvement in business confidence, which bears out a number of recent surveys of business confidence. Confidence is now at the highest level since August 1988 and the distributive trade sector improved strongly in May to plus 32 per cent. It is useful so soon after the election to have confirmation from the Labour party that it would not wish to follow prudent fiscal policies and that it would be interested in moving to lower interest rates, whether that was prudent or not. I am sure that the public, especially the investing public, will note that.

Retail Prices Inflation

2. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current level of retail prices inflation in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Germany and *(c)* the European Community as a whole.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): In April, retail price inflation was 4·3 per cent. in the United Kingdom; consumer price inflation was 4·6 per cent. in Germany and 4·8 per cent. in the European Community as a whole.

Mr. Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend give a warm welcome to the announcement on Tuesday that producer price inflation is at the reduced level of 3·6 per cent? Does he agree that that figure, coupled with the figure for wage inflation which is also falling, means that British businesses can look forward to an excellent future in a highly competitive position vis-a-vis the rest of Europe, in which we shall be poised to improve on our present position?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend makes an important point, because producer price inflation is a good indicator of what we may expect in future for retail prices inflation. If we take out food, drink and tobacco, which were influenced by price increases in the Budget, producer output inflation was 2·7 per cent. in May, down from 5·4 per cent. a year earlier. That is the lowest rate of increase since June 1969. That is a very clear message and indicator of the way in which inflation pressure has abated in our economy. As my hon. Friend says, that bodes well for the future.

Mr. Beith: Is the target for inflation now 2 per cent., as the Chancellor says, or zero per cent., as the Prime Minister implies when he talks about stable prices? Does the Chancellor recognise the tendency of inflation to increase in the British economy when there is growth, or is he no longer worried about that now that the growth forecast has been revised from 1 per cent. to 0·5 per cent?

Mr. Lamont: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have said that our ambition is to get price stability. The hon. Gentleman may remember that we had a discussion about that in the Select Committee and said that, because of changes in the retail prices index, 2 per cent. was probably the equivalent of price stability because the index did not capture all goods and services that come on to the market. The hon. Gentleman is right to emphasise that we need to improve the working of the economy—the supply side—to ensure that we do not have a resurgence of inflation when growth is more firmly based.

Mr. John Townend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that success in bringing down inflation is a prerequisite of lower interest rates? There has been a welcome fall in wage increases in manufacturing industry. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we need a similar fall in wage settlements in the public and service sectors?

Mr. Lamont: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. It is extremely important that the public sector sets an example and that wage settlements in the public sector are based strictly on what is affordable and what is needed to recruit and retain people in the public service. We cannot go beyond that or we would be asking the private sector to bear the whole burden of adjustment, which would be extremely unfair and unwelcome.

Mr. Chris Smith: Does the Chancellor accept that the underlying rate of inflation, which excludes mortgage interest—which he has favoured in the past over the retail prices index and which is a more appropriate comparison anyway—still shows us performing worse than Germany and worse than the European average? Even that has been purchased at a horrendous cost in terms of recession and unemployment.

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman should make himself clear—[HON. MEMBERS: "He has."] No, he is contradicting himself. First he says that the underlying rate of inflation is too high and then he says that the policies to get it down are too painful. I have always made it clear that we want not only to get the headline rate down but to get the underlying rate of inflation down. That is coming down and the differential between our underlying rate, minus mortgage interest payments, vis-a-vis that of Germany has narrowed considerably in the past year.

Racehorses

3. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about differing VAT levels throughout Europe on the sale of racehorses; and if he will make a statement.

The Paymaster General (Sir John Cope): We have received many representations about the different rates of VAT within the European Community on the sale of racehorses. I understand the concerns of the bloodstock

industry about the potential position next year, and we are working with industry representatives to explore the options open to them.

Mr. Alexander: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Will he bear it in mind that the Irish rate is 2·3 per cent. and that the French rate is 5·5 per cent? Will he bear it in mind also that large sums are involved in the sale of a racehorse and that it will be much easier for organisations such as Tattersall's and other dealers to take their entire operations to a country where the tax regime is much more favourable? Will my right hon. Friend look at this question urgently and make sure that our breeders and dealers are no worse off than if their business operations were in other parts of the European Community?

Sir John Cope: We are indeed looking carefully at this question, but anybody who is considering moving his business operation should think carefully before doing so because, apart from anything else, the French have not got permission for their reduced rate, although they claim to have it. There is opposition to it from both the Commission and ourselves.

Mr. Enright: Will the Minister consider giving the same sort of consideration to greyhounds and whippets?

Sir John Cope: Of course.

Mr. Paice: I thank my right hon. Friend for his obvious commitment to finding a solution. We greatly appreciate the efforts of my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) when she held his position. She tried very hard to find a way to deal with this matter. The industry employs about 8,000 people. This country is pre-eminent in the industry and has a positive balance of trade. If we do not find a way through, we shall lose it all. Moreover, the Treasury will lose the VAT.

Sir John Cope: One should not be too apocalyptic about it. Apart from VAT, the racing industry has a number of troubles. Nevertheless, I fully understand the points that my hon. Friend has made.

Interest Rates

4. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had recently with the mortgage lenders association regarding interest rates.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): My right hon. Friend met the Council of Mortgage Lenders on 2 June. A number of issues were discussed on that occasion.

Mr. Pike: I thank the Minister for his reply. Does he recognise that the average mortgage interest rate is still 10·98 per cent. and that since the Tories came to power in 1979 there have been only two months when interest rates were below 10 per cent? Does the Minister recognise that, for many people, continuation of the abolition of stamp duty will not be as important as getting mortgage interest rates below 10 per cent. and keeping them there?

Mr. Nelson: It is a sign of success, rather than failure, that the Government's economic policies have led to nine successive reductions in interest rates, amounting to 5 per cent. The average mortgage interest rate is now under 11 per cent. On a typical £30,000 endowment mortgage, payments are down by £85 a month since October 1990. By any account, that is considerable progress.

Mr. Colvin: The House is aware of the value of mortgage interest tax relief to home buyers, but has my hon. Friend considered the introduction of a more general housing tax allowance that could be made available to those who rent their homes as well as to those who buy their homes? That would help to bring down the net cost of renting and would also help to bring on to the market some of the 650,000 dwellings that at present are sitting empty.

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend makes an interesting suggestion. We acknowledge the importance of the private rented sector. The cost of mortgage interest relief is considerable. The Government have already introduced a number of expensive and worthwhile measures to encourage the private rented sector.

Mr. Battle: Will the Government admit that, according to their figures, since they introduced their relief scheme the number of people in mortgatge arrears who have been taken before the courts has increased every month this year? Will the Government now accept that the scheme has proved to be ineffective and a damp squib? Will they immediately consider a scheme to convert mortgages into rents to ease the mortgage misery faced by many millions of people?

Mr. Nelson: That is certainly not the view of the Council of Mortgage Lenders, which estimates that, as a result of the package of measures introduced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, there will be about 55,000 fewer repossessions this year than would otherwise have been the case.

Mr. Nicholls: Contrary to what my hon. Friend has just heard from the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), the mortgage rescue scheme has been very successful in my constituency. Will my hon. Friend refute the suggestion, implicit in what has been said, that there could ever be a time when some homes are not repossessed? Is it not significant that fewer than 0·5 per cent. of all existing mortgage holders are in danger of having their homes repossessed?

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right—the figure is less than 0·5 per cent., although the Government acknowledge that in each individual case that means real distress for the family involved. However, we cannot indemnify every possible position. The measures introduced by my right hon. Friend have brought real relief to many tens of thousands of people.

Mrs. Beckett: Does the Minister recall that when his right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced his scheme just before Christmas, he claimed that it would help some 40,000 families? Most hon. Members understood him to be saying that that would be achieved by August. Can the hon. Gentleman confirm that fewer than 10 families have been helped? If so, as both the problem and the money that the Government set aside to solve it still exist, why do not the Government announce an extension of the scheme?

Mr. Nelson: I think that I can help the hon. Lady because her facts and her understanding are wrong. The Council of Mortgage Lenders has confirmed that, in its

opinion, the package introduced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will save not 10 but 55,000 people from repossessions. It is true that only a limited number of people are being helped by schemes at present, but that is also a reflection of the fact that many people have been saved from repossessions and so are able to continue to occupy their homes.

Mr. David Shaw: Does my hon. Friend agree that one reason why there have been so many reductions in interest rates is that the markets have considerable confidence in the Government? Does he further agree that, to retain that confidence and to make further interest rate reductions possible, we need policies to ensure that public expenditure is restrained and that pay policies in both the public and the private sectors are moderate in the forthcoming pay round?

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend is right; the Government are fully committed to constraining public expenditure and reducing inflation. That is the surest way to bring about further reductions in interest rates and mortgage interest rates.

VAT

6. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the level of VAT in 1979 and in each succeeding year.

Sir John Cope: From 18 June 1979 the highest rate of VAT, which was 12½ per cent. was abolished and the standard rate of VAT was increased from 8 per cent. to 15 per cent. On 1 April 1991 that rate was increased to 17½ per cent.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister acknowledge that VAT was 8 per cent. when the Labour Government left office but that it is now 17·5 per cent.—an increase of 119 per cent? Does not that bear heavily on poorer homes? The Government claim that they are reducing taxation and many people appear to believe that. Does the Minister agree that the conclusion to be drawn from that is that although the Government are not good at reducing taxation, they are most adept at black propaganda?

Sir John Cope: The hon. Gentleman is drawing attention only to the standard rate of VAT in 1979. Of course, what matters is real disposable incomes, not just the tax burden. As the Institute of Fiscal Studies said, there were real gains in all parts of income distribution between 1979 and 1988.

Mr. Dunn: Can my hon. Friend confirm that there is no question whatsoever of the United Kingdom being forced to give up zero rates?

Sir John Cope: I can indeed. Our zero rates are guaranteed by the sixth VAT directive and they can be changed only by the unanimous agreement of all member states. Obviously, we have no intention of agreeing to that.

Dr. Marek: May I welcome the Minister to his first Question Time as the Paymaster General? Will he not be corrupted immediately by using selective statistics and admit that the burden of taxation has gone up and that, in spite of what it says, the Conservative party has increased the burden of taxation on the British people compared with the days when Labour was in office? Will he also make the pledge that the Prime Minister made before the election, that the scope of VAT will not be widened one iota during this Parliament?

Sir John Cope: I am happy to reinforce what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, in so far as I can add anything to it. Obviously, we stand entirely by what he said. On the earlier part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I certainly have not been corrupted and I have no intention of being corrupted. The statistics that I gave are the relevant statistics and they are extremely important to the people concerned. In any case, the amount of taxation to which the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) referred concerned VAT.

Building Societies

7. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what dates building societies objected to the unequal impact of the Income Tax (Building Society) Regulations 1986; and how many judicial reviews have ensued.

Mr. Nelson: Building societies have raised this issue on a number of occasions. The 1986 regulations have been subject to judicial review, and further action is under way arising out of legislation last year.

Mr. Bottomley: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is unparalleled interference in the conclusions of the courts; that there is an unequal impact on building societies, whereby the Woolwich is separated from the Leeds, the Loughborough, the Greenwich and others; that it is unjust to treat people in different ways; and that that approach will be unsustainable when the matter gets to Europe? Would it not be a good idea if my hon. Friend and his colleagues got together with some of the affected societies and drew the sorry business to a conclusion? That would probably be done at a cost of less than £100 million out of the £15,000 million of taxation imposed on building societies over the past five years.

Mr. Nelson: I understand why my hon. Friend feels that the regulations were unfair, but I do not agree with him. The matter was carefully considered during debates on section 53 of the Finance Act 1991 and Parliament accepted that the 1986 transitional provisions did not involve double taxation. What is now in question in the Leeds case is not transitional tax due from building societies but mainstream composite rate tax, for a number of years payable by all CRT payers. The Government are right to put that beyond question by confirming the intention of Parliament.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

8. **Mr. Martin Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met his European counterparts to discuss the operation of the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend regularly attends meetings of the European Council of Finance Ministers with his Community colleagues. The operation of the exchange rate mechanism has been discussed at a number of past meetings.

Mr. Jones: Will the Chancellor say whether a revaluation upwards of the deutschmark within the ERM would be good or bad for the British economy?

Mr. Nelson: It is not for my right hon. Friend or for me to comment on prospective movements in exchange rates.

Mr. Morgan: Why not?

Mr. Nelson: What it is right for the Government to comment on is that we are committed firmly to maintaining our position within the exchange rate parameters, which we have done to the benefit of the country in terms of a sound exchange rate, and reducing the levels of inflation and interest rates.

Mr. Renton: Will my hon. Friend confirm that sterling being within the exchange rate mechanism has added considerably to the stability of sterling in the past 18 months? Will he confirm also that it is the Government's wish to enter the narrow band of the exchange rate mechanism in due course? Has my hon. Friend any idea when that might be practicable?

Mr. Nelson: We will move in due course to the narrow band at the current central parity of DM2.95 to the pound. In the meantime, it is our firm intention to remain in parity with all the existing currencies within the exchange rate parameters.

Mr. Skinner: Why does not the Minister let the Chief Secretary to the Treasury answer this question so that he can make a statement not only about the exchange rate mechanism and whether it will be shifted, but about the principle of the common market in the Maastricht treaty? Let him stand up and tell us. His right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has answered——

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend and I are at one on this issue as, indeed, on all others.

Mr. Winterton: I fully accept that the ERM is an efficient anti-inflationary discipline, but does my hon. Friend accept that if we could react to the health of our economy, with inflation just above 4 per cent., interest rates in Britain could be reduced to 8 per cent. if we were outside the ERM? That would be of immense benefit to manufacturing and to mortgage payers in Britain.

Mr. Nelson: I understand what my hon. Friend says, but I do not agree and nor do the Government. Indeed, a strong case could be put that interest rates would have to be higher if we were outside the ERM rather than within it.

Inflation

9. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Prime Minister's oral answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, column 494, what evidence he has suggesting that inflation will fall to 1½ per cent. by mid 1993.

Mr. Nelson: The forecast for producer-price inflation is underpinned by the prospect of further marked improvement in unit labour cost performance. Lower wage settlements have still to feed through fully into earnings, and productivity will continue to recover.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not true that if producer-price inflation dropped to 1½ per cent., it would mean that the economy was flat on its back? Is it not also true that if the economy took off, inflation would inevitably rise because Britain has lost its productive capacity?

Mr. Nelson: I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that economies such as Germany and Japan, which have low producer-price inflation, can hardly be described as flat on their backs—far from it. Low inflation of both retail and producer prices is more likely to lead to sound economic growth.

Mr. Mans: Does my hon. Friend agree that long-term low inflation and long-term growth depend on our international competitiveness, which is a lot better now than a decade ago?

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Confidence is returning. That is reflected most markedly perhaps by the substantial and buoyant levels of inward investment.

Mr. Morgan: Will the Chief Secretary have a word with the Prime Minister when he returns and tell him to desist from the practice of continually switching to the measure of inflation which gives the Government the greatest short-run presentational benefits? They switch from headline inflation to core inflation to underlying inflation and now to the new measure of factory gate inflation. To most people in the street, that means that the price of factory gates has fallen but nothing else. I understand that the word "portillo" means factory gate in Spanish, unless my Castilian has been struck by lightning. Perhaps that is one reason why the Government use that measure—I do not know—but I should be grateful if the Minister would have a word with the Prime Minister and tell him to stop trying to deceive the British public.

Mr. Nelson: The hon. Gentleman's complaint should be with not the Prime Minister but his hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who asked the question about producer-price inflation. I am entitled to reply by pointing out that producer-price inflation, which was down to 2·7 per cent. in May, is the lowest for some 23 years. That is surely good news which the whole House welcomes.

European Community (Contributions)

10. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the United Kingdom's net contribution to the European Community in 1991; and what it is expected to be in 1992.

Mr. Lamont: The United Kingdom's net contribution to the European Community budget in 1991 was £545 million. It is forecast to be £2·6 billion in 1992.

Mr. Riddick: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on defeating the wholly unwarranted and expansionary budget plan proposed by Jacques Delors earlier this week. Does my right hon. Friend agree that so long as Britain makes such massive net contributions to help the supposedly poor countries of the European Community —Portugal, Ireland, Spain and Greece—we shall find it virtually impossible to meet the United Nations target for overseas aid to third-world countries in genuine need?

Mr. Lamont: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those remarks. He will be encouraged to know that the majority

of European Community Finance Ministers agreed with him because they took the view that the proposals by the President of the Commission for an expansion of the Community budget were not justified. That must be right when one considers that the suggestion is that the Community should expand spending at the rate of about 5·6 per cent. per annum in real terms. Frankly, that is unaffordable. As my hon. Friend said, it is extremely difficult for Finance Ministers in each country to justify economy at home when such incredible extravagance is proposed at European Community level.

Mr. Dalyell: Yah-boo apart, is the House of Commons not entitled to a serious answer from the Chancellor about the Chief Secretary's attitude to that matter?

Mr. Lamont: I can tell the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary is strongly in favour of economy in the European Community budget. I do not know why the hon. Gentleman expects anything else.

Mr. Wilkinson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if the Government are serious about reducing public expenditure, as they ought to be in view of the forecasts of how it is rising, a good place to start is our net contribution to Brussels? Should it not be reduced rather than increased?

Mr. Lamont: I have already explained the position that the Government and the majority of other Governments in Europe take. The Community ought to take into account the fact that, even within the existing own resources ceiling, there is plenty of room for increased expenditure. Under the existing guidelines, it could increase by more than 3 per cent. per annum in real terms. The ambitious plans for interference in European industry and trans-European networks are not projects that we can endorse. I accept my hon. Friend's point. There are many competing claims for public expenditure in this country, and Europe ought to take that into account before telling us that we should economise at home.

VAT

11. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has received any recent representations to make changes to value added tax rates.

Sir John Cope: My right hon. Friend receives many representations on taxation.

Mr. Bayley: As the Minister responsible for setting VAT rates, can the right hon. Gentleman tell me the current percentage rate charged on the following products: a milk chocolate digestive biscuit, a deep frozen chocolate mousse, and a Kit Kat bar? If he cannot give an answer, will he get rid of the confusion by rating all such products at the general food rate of zero?

Sir John Cope: It would probably be more useful if I told the hon. Gentleman that Customs and Excise are reviewing legislation on the VAT treatment of snacks to take account of developments in the market.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Did the Chancellor of the Exchequer have the opportunity on Tuesday to raise with Commissioner Scrivener her reported comment that she will take Britain to court next year if we have not charged VAT on food, electricity and gas? Has he received any legal advice from Government officials on whether the Commission would have the right to go to the court to seek to oblige Britain to charge VAT on those items—which are zero-rated—under the terms of the Single European Act, which calls on member states to charge VAT at a harmonised level, as is necessary to complete the internal market?

Sir John Cope: We have received legal advice and are satisfied that all our zero rates meet the criteria of the sixth directive, which is what matters. As I said in answer to an earlier question, it would take unanimity in the Council of Ministers to alter that, and we obviously would not agree.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The whole House will welcome an assurance from the Minister that the Government intend neither to widen the scope of VAT nor to increase the rates. I invite him to give that assurance to the House.

Sir John Cope: We have no plans and no need to raise or extend VAT, as my right hon. Friends have said on numerous occasions.

Economic Policy

12. **Mr. Willetts:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet the Director General of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss economic policy.

Mr. Lamont: I meet the Director General of the CBI from time to time to discuss a broad range of matters.

Mr. Willetts: Has my right hon. Friend seen the latest quarterly CBI industrial trends survey, which shows a big improvement in export orders and business confidence? Is he aware that since the general election, we have seen the biggest improvement in business optimism since 1988?

Mr. Lamont: I agree with my hon. Friend and, indeed, the evidence of the May survey was extremely encouraging. The script attached to it of the evidence from the CBI stated:

> "Evidence from the latest CBI surveys continues to suggest that the economic recovery is, at last, on the way . . . the CBI's latest economic forecast suggests that growth will resume in the second quarter of this year and continue throughout 1992 and 1993."

That was the opinion of the CBI and it is welcome.

Mr. John Evans: What response does the Chancellor of the Exchequer have to the statement of Sir Antony Pilkington, the chairman of the St. Helens glassmakers who had to cut the dividend for the first time and see profits collapse, that the Chancellor is killing British industry and that he has not met one business man who can see any signs of any economic upturn whatever?

Mr. Lamont: It so happens that I had dinner with Sir Antony Pilkington last week and he assured me that he wholly supported Government policy.

Mr. Oppenheim: When considering calls from the CBI and others to cut interest rates, will my right hon. Friend consider the position in the United States where interest rates have been cut to 3·5 per cent. but where recovery remains elusive and long-term market rates remain almost as high as in this country? Does that not illustrate that the real problem is a shortage of capital in international markets and an imbalance between savings and consumption, particularly Government consumption,

internationally? Bearing that in mind, does he agree that premature cuts in interest rates would exacerbate the problems by reducing incentives to invest?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend makes a good point in reminding us that the function of interest rates is to balance investment and savings. It is necessary both to attract the relevant amount of capital and to encourage savings. My hon. Friend is also right to emphasise that it is the long-term rate of interest which is particularly important for investment. Unless we have tight control of public spending it will be more difficult to get interest rates down. That is why my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury is absolutely right that economy in public spending is essential.

Balance of Trade

14. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects Britain's balance of trade to be in surplus.

Mr. Portillo: The "Financial Statement and Budget Report" forecast for the current account was for a deficit of £6½ billion in 1992 and £9 billion at an annual rate in the first half of 1993. Forecasts for future years are not available.

Mr. Hall: That reply from the Chief Secretary in no way answers my question to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I will ask the question again because that answer demonstrates the Government's dangerous contempt for our balance of trade deficit. Will the Chief Secretary answer the specific question: when will our trade next be in surplus? Will he tell the House whether he agrees with the advice of the President of the Board of Trade to the Conservative Government not to argue that the balance of trade deficit is easy to manage and would not be a problem for the Government to cope with?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman's substantive question was answered in what I said. I told him that we made no forecasts beyond the first half of 1993. He asked about the sustainability or manageability of the current account deficit. At about 1 per cent. of gross domestic product it is indeed sustainable. At present we are seeing a substantial inflow of investment into this country. There is strong investment in particular from the United States and Japan, which tends to demonstrate that there is no difficulty in funding the deficit.

Mr. John Greenway: Although that inward investment is particularly welcome, does my right hon. Friend agree that in terms of Britain's balance of payments our overseas investment into other countries has increased in value in the past year by substantially more than our trade imbalance?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend makes a good point. He will recognise that that inward investment helps the very significant growth that there has been in our exports. Our growth in manufactured exports is showing up now compared with world trade. During the 1980s the proportion of our manufactures fell as part of world trade. Since 1988, there has been a marked increase.

Mr. Barnes: If the Minister will not give an estimate of when we shall next be in surplus, will he give us a guess?

Mr. Portillo: I made this perfectly clear to the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall). We have produced a forecast for 1993. Our export volume is extremely high. We are now seeing some increase in imports which, because they tend to centre around basic materials, provide some evidence of recovery which the hon. Gentleman should welcome.

Policy Priorities

15. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his policy priorities during the British presidency of the EC Council of Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lamont: The United Kingdom's key priorities are the completion of the single market, enlargement of the Community, and working towards a conclusion on the Community's future financing.

Mr. Shersby: Is my right hon. Friend aware that financial orthodoxy is one of the most important priorities for the presidency of the Community? I hope that he will follow that in the months to come.

Mr. Lamont: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 June.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton) *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: Remember to give short answers.

Mr. Newton: I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is in his usual friendly form.

I have been asked to reply. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is in Rio de Janeiro to attend the Earth summit and will have bilateral meetings later today with various Heads of Government.

Mr. Darling: Why did the Secretary of State for Social Security need to issue a statement yesterday expressing his confidence in and support for the Prime Minister's policies?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security clearly thought—in my view, rightly—that his position had been misconstrued and that it was sensible to make that clear. I am glad to note that in some quarters journalists have begun to question the interpretation that had been placed on a meeting which had been interpreted as a conspiracy, but which appeared to have Government Whips present. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House should come to order and let us get on with our business properly.

Mr. Biffen: During my right hon. Friend's hitherto busy day, has he borne constantly in mind the speech made just under four years ago in which Mr. Jacques Delors said that 80 per cent. of economic decisions and perhaps even 80 per cent. of fiscal and social decisions should be subject to initiation at Community level? Does my right hon.

Friend agree that that is the unacceptable ambition of political centralism? Does he further agree that, in those circumstances, the reappointment of Mr. Delors would be provocative and counter-productive? May I say that my question was formulated without the assistance of the Whips?

Mr. Newton: I think that I could have guessed that.

The British Government's position on subsidiarity is that we are concerned to enhance and underpin the concept. The Maastricht agreement did precisely that, and the British Government will continue to pursue that objective.

Mr. Hattersley: Why did the Government promise that after 1 April no patient would have to wait more than two years for hospital admission?

Mr. Newton: The Government made commitments in the patients charter and in relation to the development of health service policies that the aim was to ensure that no one should have to wait more than two years for treatment. Huge progress has been made in that, with a drop of nearly 50,000 in the numbers awaiting treatment in the year running up to April. It is obviously a disappointment that there was a small increase in April. That is now being addressed.

Mr. Hattersley: I will give the Leader of the House credit for getting the statement wrong by mistake rather than by intention. The document that went through every door in the land guaranteed—the Government's word—that after 1 April—the Government's date—no one would wait longer than two years. Did the Government ever really mean that, or was it just pre-election propaganda?

Mr. Newton: Not merely did the Government mean it, but a huge improvement, to which I referred, has been delivered. That progress will be reinforced by the action that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has taken.

Mr. Hattersley: Whether or not the Government meant it, they clearly failed in that ambition. What does the right hon. Gentleman say to those citizens who believed that the Government were honest in the guarantee that after 1 April they would not have to wait for more than two years but who now find that they are having to wait for more than two years because the Government failed to keep a promise which was made purely for electoral purposes?

Mr. Newton: A reduction in the number of patients waiting over two years from more than 50,000 to fewer than 2,000 in a year is hardly a failure of ambition.

Q2. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 June.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evennett: Does my right hon. Friend agree that fighting the international drugs trade is vitally important? Will he join me in congratulating the Prime Minister on his announcement yesterday in Colombia?

Mr. Newton: Yes, and I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. The illicit drugs trade is an international problem which demands an international response. What the Prime Minister has agreed with the Colombian Government in the last few days represents a significant and valuable advance.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the right hon. Gentleman try to explain to the people of Northern Ireland why, despite the Government's promise that hospital waiting lists would be reduced, they have been going up rather than going down and today we have had the announcement of further hospital beds being closed although people are waiting for treatment.

Mr. Newton: I have made the Government's position absolutely clear on that matter. Whether in Northern Ireland or in any other part of the United Kingdom, the Government are determined to deliver the improvement in service set out in the citizens charter and the patients charter. Further progress has still to be made, but the progress already made is striking.

Q3. **Mr. Richard Alexander:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 June.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Alexander: Is my right hon. Friend aware that some local education authorities are discriminating against pupils who attend grant-maintained schools? Does he agree that any authority that treats children in that way is not fit to be called an education authority?

Mr. Newton: I agree with my hon. Friend and join him in deploring what has been reported in relation to some local authorities' attitudes towards children at grant-maintained schools or, for that matter, at city technology colleges. For once, I wish to pay a compliment to the Opposition Front Bench. I was pleased to read the remarks of the Labour education spokesman, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) yesterday, which suggested a responsible shift, for once, in the Opposition's position.

Mr. O'Brien: How do the Government intend to reduce the waiting time for operations in hospital, as people are now having to wait over two years?

Mr. Newton: I do not know how many times I have to say this to get it understood—*[Interruption.]* For those waiting over two years, there has been a movement of 400, in relation to a total number of operations running into many hundreds of thousands, and against the background of a reduction from more than 50,000 to fewer than 2,000 over the year before. We intend to maintain that improvement.

Q4. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 June.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Robertson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the decision by NatWest to return £33 million to Maxwell pensioners is good news for those concerned, and also an example to others who hold Maxwell pension fund money?

Mr. Newton: I agree with my hon. Friend on both counts. What has happened is a substantial vindication of the approach and effective package announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security earlier this week. I hope that that will be of especial comfort to my hon. Friend, as I know how much effort he has put in on behalf of Maxwell pensioners in his constituency.

Q5. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 June.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Reid: Will the Leader of the House describe to my constituents in the Bellshill area some of the supposed advantages of the specialisation that would accompany the opting out of the local hospital? In particular, will he identify the services that could be regarded as non-essential or peripheral and may be curtailed or closed down according to the law of supply and demand? I should tell him that the local hospital is the Bellshill maternity hospital.

Mr. Newton: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will have noted the reference to a particular hospital. What I would say to the hon. Gentleman's constituents is that if they are in any doubt they should come and visit the growing number of trust hospitals and talk to the staff and patients, who are experiencing the benefits.

Mr. Gorst: As the British Government are a signatory to article 8 of the European convention on human rights, will my right hon. Friend tell us what the Government feel that they should do to protect the family life and privacy of the royal family who, after all, are entitled to the same consideration as other members of the community?

Mr. Newton: I made some observations on that subject on Tuesday. I am sure that people both outside and inside the House will take note of my hon. Friend's concern, which has been added to that expressed in other quarters earlier this week.

Q6. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 June.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jones: The Lord President of the Council will no doubt recall that in a previous Parliament I introduced the Consumer Guarantees Bill, which endeavoured to give rights to people who had purchased shoddy goods. The Bill was killed by Conservative Members. It had no Government support, but offers were made for guarantees to be considered. Will the new Government and the Prime Minister consider guarantees and give people real rights instead of the confetti of charters?

Mr. Newton: I had better acknowledge that I am not familiar with all the details of the hon. Gentleman's proposed private Member's Bill, but the Government already have a considerable record in protecting the rights of consumers of all kinds, and a continued determination to do so. Indeed, we have greatly improved the rights of consumers of public services.

Mr. Cash: Further to the question asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), about Mr. Delors, will my right hon. Friend confirm that, in line with the EC principle that everybody seems to like to move step by step, there could at least be a review of Mr. Delors' position, if not an announcement that he will not be reappointed?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend, who puts his question a little more gently than did my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), will be aware that those are matters for consideration at the Lisbon Council. It would not be sensible for me to go further than I already have in respect of my right hon. Friend.

Q7. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 June.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Watson: Following the decision of the Danish people to reject the Maastricht agreement, the Prime Minister and the Government have stressed their commitment to ratifying the treaty. Whether or not the people of the United Kingdom are also given a referendum —I, for one, am not afraid to trust them on constitutional matters—a fundamental cornerstone of the treaty remains subsidiarity, to which the Leader of the House referred in answer to a previous question. On the Prime Minister's return from Rio, will the Leader of the House urge him to accept that the principle of subsidiarity must also be applied within the United Kingdom, starting with a referendum to allow the Scottish people to decide their constitutional future?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the Government have no plans for a referendum, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made perfectly clear on a number of occasions. The principle of subsidiarity already applies to the Government's approach to the United Kingdom, where much of the power is devolved down—at national level in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and at local authority level in England.

Mrs. Currie: Does my right hon. Friend agree that many of us voted for the Maastricht deal as we felt that it was the best deal to be had, both for the United Kingdom and for Europe, and we have in no way backed off from that view? Does he agree that when we take over the presidency of the European Community in three weeks' time our partners will look to this country for positive leadership, backed up with the full confidence of the House, including Opposition parties and including the Whips? That is what we should be aiming to achieve.

Mr. Newton: In my judgment there is widespread support from hon. Members of all parties for the emphasis placed by the Government, and achieved in the Maastricht agreement, on the concept of subsidiarity and the development of the Community through intergovernmental co-operation. The Government will pursue and advance those key objectives during the United Kingdom presidency.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 15 JUNE—Second Reading of the Boundary Commissions Bill.

TUESDAY 16 JUNE—Opposition day (2nd allotted day). There will be a debate described as "The Problems Facing Water Consumers Since Privatisation" on an Opposition motion.

WEDNESDAY 17 JUNE—Second Reading of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill.

Motion on the Army, Air Force and Naval Discipline Acts (Continuance) Order.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

THURSDAY 18 JUNE—Motion on the Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order.

Motion on the Northern Ireland Act 1974 (Interim Period Extension) Order.

FRIDAY 19 JUNE—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 22 JUNE—Progress in Committee of the Boundary Commissions Bill.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee A will meet on Wednesday 17 June 1992 to discuss civil aviation.

[Wednesday 17 June 1992
European Standing Committee A
Relevant European Community Documents
(a) 5080/90 Civil aviation: Community competence
(b) 8207/91, 8051/91, 8090/91 Civil Aviation
Relevant Report of the European Legislation Committee
(a) HC 11-xvii (1989-90)
(b) HC 24-viii (1991-92)]

Dr. Cunningham: Can the Leader of the House confirm that it is still the Prime Minister's intention to make an oral statement in the House on his return next week from the Earth summit in Rio de Janeiro? I believe that such a statement would be welcomed throughout the House.

When does the Leader of the House expect to be able to table motions to establish the Select Committees of the House? The Opposition believe that there should be a Select Committee to cover each Department of State. We cannot accept in this Parliament what prevailed in the last —when, in defiance of Standing Orders, there was no Select Committee to deal with Scottish affairs throughout the entire Parliament. If the right hon. Gentleman is willing to meet those two principles, there is no reason why the Select Committees cannot be established very quickly.

Will the Leader of the House tell us his intentions and can we have some advice next week about the report of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House? Inevitably, the report was a compromise. Nevertheless, it was generally welcomed, and it would benefit the House if the right hon. Gentleman could find time for an early debate on it.

As a result of the Danish referendum and its consequences for the Maastricht treaty, may we conclude that there will be no further consideration of the Bill to ratify that treaty before the House rises for the summer recess?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has asked four questions, the first of which was about a statement on Rio. I expect that on his return the Prime Minister will make a statement on the Earth summit. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that there has already been some discussion through the usual channels about Select Committees. Both he and I are anxious to press ahead as quickly as possible, and I note his comments in that connection.

The hon. Gentleman asked about what is known to most hon. Members as the Jopling report. I detect some difference of emphasis above and below the Gangway on the Opposition side. I am aware of the widespread interest in the matter and I shall soon make an announcement about the timing of the debate. Perhaps we can have further discussions about it through the usual channels.

Questions about the European Communities (Amendment) Bill are also matters for consideration, but I assure him—it is implicit in my statement—that there is no question of that Bill returning to the House next week.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): Further to what my right hon. Friend said about the Jopling report, is he aware that there is considerable dissatisfaction because he has failed yet again to announce, even tentatively, the business for the week after next? That was one of the easiest recommendations of the Jopling report for him to accept. There is continuing consternation that he has failed to announce the date upon which the House will rise for the summer recess—a matter of the utmost importance to many hon. Members with families.

Mr. Newton: I genuinely note what my hon. Friend says. I observe, perhaps rather wryly, that some of the difficulties are illustrated by the uncertainties that have attended parliamentary business over the past 10 days.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Following the statement by the Prime Minister on his return from Rio, may we expect an early debate on a substantive motion on that matter? It would be helpful to know whether there is any prospect of that before the summer recess.

What progress, if any, has the right hon. Gentleman been able to make on the recommendation from the Top Salaries Review Body on secretarial allowances and Members' pay?

Mr. Newton: On the first question, I think I said last week that the sensible course would be to await the outcome of the Rio summit and the Prime Minister's statement following that. Perhaps we could then consider a debate by discussions in the usual way. I hope soon to inform the House of our intentions about publishing the report from the Top Salaries Review Body on the Members' office costs allowance.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will my right hon. Friend accept that Conservative Members are concerned about the Select Committees and that there is a

real desire that Select Committees should monitor every Department? Will he undertake to make a statement next week on this?

Mr. Newton: I cannot undertake to make a statement with that degree of precision, although I should certainly like to do so. I acknowledge my hon. Friend's concern, which I am sure is shared by the shadow Leader of the House and by other hon. Members.

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Will the Leader of the House find time next week to summon the Secretary of State for Health to the House to answer questions about security in our nation's hospitals? On 25 May Mr. Gordon Woodhatch, one of my constituents, while a patient of the Royal Free hospital in my constituency, was murdered. My correspondence to date with the Secretary of State, the first letter demanding an independent inquiry, produced one letter, the final phrase of which was that day-to-day security was the responsibility of the hospital's managers. That is not an acceptable response to such a serious crime. Five hours before the murder, a nurse in the accident and emergency department of the hospital was attacked. These are two more of the growing number of incidents in our hospitals of attacks both on patients—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I have to draw the hon. Lady's attention to the fact that we are not having a debate. Her question must be specific and in good order, as it was originally, and directed to the Leader of the House.

Ms. Jackson: My apologies, Madam Speaker. It is just that this issue has caused such concern not only to my constituents but to the relatives of my constituent who was killed that I shall be grateful for the Secretary of State's response.

Mr. Newton: I respect the way in which the hon. Lady has brought to the attention of the House what is clearly an important case both for the hospital and for the people involved. From my experience as Minister for Health some years ago, I can assure her that this matter is generally taken seriously, and I shall draw her remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. On the specific question lurking at the beginning of the hon. Lady's remarks, I note that I shall not have to summon my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health to the House next week because, according to my notes, she is due to answer questions on health matters on Tuesday.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): When will the charge-capping measures be laid before the House? Is my right hon. Friend aware that a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House believe that the Department of the Environment has got it wrong and that Warwickshire should not be in the dock?

Mr. Newton: That appears to be another comment that I need to draw to the attention of one of my right hon. Friends. I cannot answer the specific question, but I anticipate that measures will be laid before the House at the earliest possible opportunity after the necessary process of observations by and consultations with the councils concerned has been gone through.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Further to the request on Select Committees made by the shadow Leader of the House, I refer the Leader of the House to the correspondence that he has had with my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) in which he suggested that the Government were reconsidering the position of the territorial Select Committees for Wales and for Scotland and of the one that there should be for Northern Ireland. What is the nature of the difficulties, and when will they be resolved?

Mr. Newton: I am aware that I have written recently to the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth). I am somewhat surprised at the construction that has been placed on my letter because no such construction was intended when I wrote it.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, apart from a tiny eccentric minority, the overwhelming majority of Members want to get on with the Jopling reforms of the sittings of the House? Why cannot my right hon. Friend announce a debate within the next two or three weeks and give us an assurance that the reforms in the report will be put into effect when we come back from the long recess?

Mr. Newton: I note what my hon. Friend says. I hope to be able to announce such a debate within the time that my hon. Friend suggests.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): When the Committee is considering the Boundary Commissions Bill, will the Government table an amendment to ensure that, as the register of 1991 to be used in the Boundary Commissions review is corrupt with 1·5 million people missing from it, an alternative will be used?

Mr. Newton: I cannot give undertakings from the Dispatch Box about the tabling of Government amendments to a Bill that has only recently been published. The hon. Gentleman may feel it right to make his point in the debates on the Bill. In my experience, the great majority of people not on the register are not there because they have chosen not to be. I do not see how they can be forced to do what they do not wish to do.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is it not ridiculous and frankly embarrassing that at a time when the Government might very well gain some all-party guidance on the settlement of the Maastricht dispute, and when people are coming here from every western and eastern Parliament to understand the mysteries of British parliamentary democracy, we do not have a Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and are unlikely to do so until the autumn? Surely there must be a case, whatever the arguments between the sides, for setting up at least the Foreign Affairs Select Committee so that we can get on with the business of the House.

Mr. Newton: I have the message. It is one that I have already received from a number of right hon. and hon. Members. I would only add that it is neither my aim nor my intention that these matters should wait until the autumn.

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): Will the Leader of the House allow next week for a debate or statement on the scandal of the large and empty building facing the House of Commons—county hall? Will he bring the Secretary of State to the House to discuss the matter? He is considering

[Ms. Kate Hoey]

sending civil servants to docklands, but should not we be considering county hall, and in particular the London School of Economics' proposal to use that valuable site?

Mr. Newton: At this rate I shall be issuing summonses to virtually all my right hon. Friends. Instead, I shall undertake to bring the hon. Lady's remarks to my right hon. and learned Friend's attention.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on education? In view of the hostility that has been shown by many Labour councils to schools that have opted out, may we have an early debate to clarify the Labour party's policy? It would appear that there has been a welcome shift in its opinion.

Mr. Newton: That sounds like a good idea, but perhaps we had better leave the Opposition to decide what matters they wish to bring to the House.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Since at two well-attended meetings of the Scottish Grand Committee hon. Members from both sides clearly said that there should be consultation with the various organisations in Scotland on the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill, will the Leader of the House explain why next Wednesday will see the Second Reading of that Bill? Is it not possible to look again at the possibility of a Special Standing Committee to enable consultation to take place; otherwise we shall have a second-rate law reform instead of listening to the first-rate arguments that have been put forward?

Mr. Newton: It seemed to the Government in the light of what happened that this was the most appropriate way of carrying forward decision-making on the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill. It does not seem to us at this stage to be an appropriate matter for a Special Standing Committee.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): As a television programme on Monday night will demonstrate open racketeering in drugs in gyms throughout Britain, will my right hon. Friend find time for us to debate the drugs issue?

Mr. Newton: I cannot respond immediately to the request for a debate on the matter, but I can assure my hon. Friend that the Government take the matter seriously and we shall look carefully at the programme to which he has referred.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I welcome the Home Secretary's release of the Hess papers. However, as the Government still appear to be holding on to the papers from the Alderney concentration camp in the United Kingdom, may we have a debate on the Government's general policies on the retention and release of such historical papers? The entire file is missing, and there seems to be no reason for that—it cannot be a matter of security. The issue should be debated on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Newton: Again, I cannot promise the debate that the hon. and learned Gentleman wants, but I shall ensure that attention is given to his point about a particular set of papers, and I hope that he will at least acknowledge that the release of the Hess papers is in line with the Government's move, with the general assent of the House, towards the greater release of information.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): My right hon. Friend has discussed the timing of the debate on the Jopling report. Will he give an undertaking that we shall be able to vote on substantive motions in that debate, or does he propose merely an Adjournment debate? This week, more than 100 additional Members have signed the motion calling for a debate and almost 200 in all have signed it.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will probably recall that I said some weeks ago that it seemed to me—I think that I had the general support of the House—that in a new Parliament, with a substantial number of new Members, the sensible course at this stage was a debate on the report as a whole.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): May I draw to the attention of the Leader of the House the tragic case in my constituency of a 15-year-old boy who is only now recovering from a serious heart attack caused by solvent abuse? Given that 149 people, mainly young people, died last year from solvent abuse, and given that we have had a campaign in the House for more than a decade—my predecessor the late Jimmy Dempsey was very much involved, as was my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall)—is it not time we had a serious debate on this important issue so that the consensus which I believe exists in the House can lead to long overdue legislation?

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's concern. From duties that I have performed previously, I am familiar with his long interest in these matters. Although I cannot promise a debate, I can assure him, his hon. Friends and my hon. Friends that the Government take these matters seriously.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I am sorry to press my right hon. Friend on the question of Select Committees —on reflection, I am not sorry. Everyone wants Select Committees to be set up, yet they are not being set up. "As soon as possible" seems to mean some time before the autumn. We can know all about Rudolf Hess, and we can know all about MI5 and MI6—so perhaps my right hon. Friend will tell us what the blockage is in the usual channels. Ordinary hon. Members might be able to unblock those channels if we knew what was going on.

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I have used, either implicitly or explicitly, the word "blockage". A number of issues have needed to be considered. I hope that it will be possible to carry the matter forward quite soon.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Will the Leader of the House confirm that it has cost taxpayers £500,000 in salaries since the Select Committees last met? Will he consider whether, if there is a further dragging of feet, the Government should take a leaf out of their own book? This week, they announced that those who had not behaved properly over the Maxwell affair should contribute to rebuilding the funds. Will those who are responsible for the blockage about which we have just heard dip into their own pockets and make good that sum to the taxpayer?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I can either immediately adopt the hon. Gentleman's suggestion or accept the implication that there has been improper

dragging of feet. I note that his distinguished voice has been added to the pressure coming from all parts of the Chamber.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Will the Leader of the House make a statement next week on the security clearance of staff in the Refreshment Department? Many of us saw reports in the press over the weekend about an international hitman with HIV who served hon. Members on the Terrace. In this enlightened age, we are not meant to worry about being served by a waiter with HIV, but many of us object strongly to being served by an international hitman who should have been spotted in the security clearance. Will my right hon. Friend look at the matter and make a statement?

Mr. Newton: It will not surprise my hon. Friend to know that the report caused concern in minds besides his. The Serjeant at Arms and the House authorities are looking closely into what happened and will take any practicable steps that can be taken to avoid a repetition.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Further to his reply to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on the Second Reading of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill, will the Leader of the House ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to explain at the start of the debate next Wednesday just why the Government believe it inappropriate to bring in people to make representations on behalf of others for whom they wish to speak? There are many people in Scotland who feel that it is obvious that such an opportunity should be given and cannot understand why the Government reject the idea.

Mr. Newton: I shall not need to ask my right hon. Friend to do that. I am sure that he will seek to do so. If he does not, I feel sure that the hon. Lady will ask him to do so.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): In considering the re-establishment of the Select Committees, will my right hon. Friend take into account the fact that it is more important to get the subject matters right rather than to set up Committees for each Department? In the last Parliament it was agreed that the Home Affairs Select Committee should be responsible for the Lord Chancellor's Department as well. It is the working arrangements that matter most, not a Select Committee for each Department.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend has been the very distinguished Chairman of a Select Committee. I note with respect the view that he expresses. I have not heard the suggestion, if this is what is in his mind, that there should be a special Select Committee for the Lord Chancellor's Department.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): As 10 days are available that had previously been allocated for consideration of the Maastricht Bill, could time be allocated to debating three reports from the Select Committee on Members' Interests? Reports were requested, in the main by this House, on the register of commercial lobbying organisations, on the rules affecting Select Committee Chairmen and on the rules affecting Members. As Select Committees have not yet been chosen on a departmental basis, surely it would make sense to draw up the new rules on Chairmen and Chairwomen before the Select Committees are established. The rules were drawn up and examined by the Select Committee on Members' Interests to protect the House and people outside from corruption in here. What is holding up the Government?

Mr. Newton: I am mindful of the fact that this matter has been raised during business questions for the last two or three weeks. I very much note what has been said, but I cannot add to what I said last week.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Although I agree with everything that has been said about the need for the immediate establishment of Select Committees, that is not the subject of my question, for which I am sure that my right hon. Friend is grateful. The Government intend to introduce legislation relating to the enfranchisement of leaseholders and all matters relating to commonhold. Can my right hon. Friend say when that very important Bill will be introduced? He has clearly intimated that it will not be introduced next week.

Mr. Newton: The two subjects to which my hon. Friend referred will be dealt with slightly differently. The leasehold enfranchisement provisions are expected to be included in the Housing, Land and Urban Development Bill, which I anticipate will come before the House in the autumn. Commonhold will be dealt with separately. I do not wish to hold out hopes that it will be practicable to deal with it in the current Session.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 233?

[That this House deplores the conduct of Government supporters engaging in practices such as the cloak and dagger approaches made by the honourable Members for Stockton South and Lanbaurgh to headteachers in constituencies other than their own in calling them to 'a private meeting to discuss recent changes in legislation on 12th June between 5.30 and 7.00 at an hotel in Teesside, unidentified, where there will be a presentation by the grant maintained trust'; notes that the honourable Member for Stockton South has approached the Head of Norton School in Stockton North but ignored the Head of Bishopsgarth in his own constituency; notes too that this is an unsolicited initiative activated by an experienced honourable Member of this House in deliberate contravention of its code of honour which requires honourable Members seeking 'to take up a matter that affects another honourable Member's constituency to inform that honourable Member', Madam Speaker, Official Report, column 145, 9th June 1992; agrees with Madam Speaker's hope expressed on that occasion that her admonition 'is taken to heart by every honourable Member, whether new or of long-standing'; and calls on all honourable Members to desist forthwith in the interest of maintaining the good standards of behaviour in this House that have stood the test of honour throughout the centuries.]

The early-day motion stands in my name and the names of 55 hon. Members. If the Leader of the House has not seen it, will he look at it? It refers to what, in my view, is a serious transgression of Members' privileges. Some hon. Members are interfering in the constituency affairs of other Members—a serious matter. This was not an isolated incident. In fact, Madam Speaker was required to make a statement on it only two days ago.

Will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he had prior knowledge of this widespread practice? If he did, will the right hon.

[Mr. Frank Cook]

Gentleman ask the Secretary of State to apologise and redress the situation immediately? If the Secretary of State did not know, will the Leader of the House ask him to instruct or to require the Members responsible to desist forthwith so that the good standards of discipline that have stood the test of time can be maintained?

Mr. Newton: I have seen the early-day motion to which the hon. Gentleman refers. We are all aware of the longstanding convention that hon. Members do not take up constituency cases that arise in another Member's constituency, but I cannot make a judgment on whether the subject of this early-day motion is covered by that convention.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will my right hon. Friend ensure that an early statement is made about the setting up of the Social Security Select Committee? I understand that many hon. Members would like the chairmen of banks and financial institutions to come before the Social Security Select Committee and explain why they are sitting on Maxwell pensioners' investments. Moreover, there are 30,000 Maxwell pensioners out there who would like to hear explanations from the chairmen of the banks about when their investments will be released for their benefit.

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's point, and I hope that the Maxwell pensioners will have been encouraged by the response of one bank following the statement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services earlier this week.

On the question of Select Committees, I do not think that I can add to what I have said on a number of occasions.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): May we have an early debate on housing policy? That would provide an opportunity for Ministers to say whether they intend to allow local authorities, including Bradford, to use the cash from the sale of council houses to build new council houses with gardens—which so many people desperately want and deserve.

Mr. Newton: There was a debate on housing matters last Friday and there will be a further debate later in the Session when we consider the Bill to which I referred in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). I do not think that I can promise the insertion of a further debate in quite the way the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May I support my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) in calling for a debate on grant-maintained schools? We could then consider the remarkable progress made by such schools in Hanwell, Greenford, Ealing and Northolt in my constituency. In such a debate, could we take note of the amazing savings in such areas as school cleaning? One school is saving £40,000 a year and putting it straight to the benefit of children.

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's request, and his important points about the progress made in these matters in his constituency, and about the advantages of grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Has the Leader of the House seen the reports about another 720 redundancies at British Aerospacee in the dynamics division at Blostock, Stevenage and Fulton? Those redundancies follow earlier job losses at British Aerospace. Will the right hon. Gentleman ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—or the President of the Board of Trade or whatever he calls himself—to come to the House next week and make a statement on the future of this vital industry?

Mr. Newton: I have seen the reports to which the hon. Gentleman refers. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend to the hon. Gentleman's request.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. We must move on to the statement.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that I do not hear points of order at this stage, but I shall certainly hear his point after the statement.

Red Routes (London)

4.1 pm

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about priority routes in London. In January, my Department published consultation proposals and requested comments by 31 March on a red route network. About 12,500 copies of the consultation document were distributed and just over 1,200 responses received. I have considered those and I am now ready to announce the decisions.

The pilot scheme in north and east London, which started 18 months ago, is already proving the enormous value of red routes in bringing better management to London's strategic traffic routes. Among the most significant benefits are that overall journey times have improved by 25 per cent., bus journey times have reduced by more than 10 per cent. and reliability increased by a third, so that more people are using the buses and, indeed, London Transport expects to introduce an express service on the pilot route next month. Of particular significance is the fact that road casualities fell by more than 200 in 1991, a fall of some 36 per cent. compared with about 12 per cent. in London as a whole. Contrary to much ill-informed comment, far from there being less parking available, there are now 620 free legal parking spaces on the route where none existed before.

In the light of that experience, I am laying an order before the House today which will designate some 300 miles of red routes throughout the capital. The first of those should be in operation by the end of next year. There will, of course, be full provision for consultation at the various stages of the design and implementation of the network.

Many reactions to the consultation exercise, notably from London Transport, pointed out that the proposed network was based on primary routes. Although those are the most suitable for longer distance traffic, they exclude some roads which carry the heaviest flows of buses. In west London, for example, the primary routes are the M4, A4 and A40, but the most important route for buses is the Uxbridge road, which links all the main shopping centres. I believe that we can greatly assist the movement of public transport in areas such as that. I shall therefore be consulting on the designation of further priority routes.

I have also decided to make significant changes to the proposals for the centre of London. The main objectives there are, again, rather different from those of the primary route network. We are seeking to help the movement of buses and local commercial traffic rather than to serve longer distance movements. I shall therefore be consulting on this central network having regard to the special characteristics of the area. In the meantime, I shall designate only the inner ring road, which roughly encompasses the area around the main railway stations, with one addition. Tower bridge, which forms part of the inner ring road, has a weight restriction on it and we need an alternative route, so I am also designating a route via London bridge.

Elsewhere, the red route network will be as proposed in the consultation document, except the following roads which I am not including: the A22 Godstone road, up to Purley cross, the A40 Holland Park avenue, Notting Hill Gate and Bayswater road, the A110 and A104, from the Cambridge road to the North Circular, the A243 Leatherhead road, up to the A3, the A304 and A308 Fulham road, the A219 Putney hill and Putney High street, and the A307 Kew road, alongside Kew gardens. I have arranged for maps and schedules to be available in the Library showing the routes to be designated, and I have, of course, written to all London Members.

This whole exercise has shown that red route measures are flexible and bring positive benefits to all concerned —residents and motorists, pedestrians and cyclists, bus users, shoppers, and local businesses. I am confident that red routes will work across London as a whole and that support for them will be even more widespread when they begin to take effect.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): The Minister alleges that red routes have brought positive benefits to various groups, particularly local businesses. Will he tell the House why a survey by Islington council shows that 80 per cent. of businesses have lost custom since the introduction of the pilot study? Will he explain why the Islington chamber of commerce has reported that 20 per cent. of local businesses on the local red route claim to have lost more than half their trade since its introduction? Have not the Government already done enough damage to small business prospects without adding to their difficulties?

Has the Minister considered the safety implications of red routes, particularly in residential areas? Surely the policy on vehicle numbers and speed runs directly contrary to his professed concern for road safety, particularly for pedestrians, cyclists and children. Will the Minister assure us that there will be traffic calming measures, funded by his Department, particularly in residential roads alongside red routes?

The Minister claimed that more people are using buses and that reliability has increased since the pilot scheme was introduced. Will he therefore explain why, in paragraph 2 of its response, London Buses Ltd. claimed:

"The proposals offer no benefits to bus services in many areas."?

In paragraph 3, London Buses went on to state:

"There is a real danger that improved traffic flow on roads in the Priority Route Network will attract more vehicles onto these and other roads."

Attracting more vehicles, particularly motor cars, seems to be the result of further widening the scheme. One of the reasons why red routes have been dropped in the centre of London is the likely adverse impact on bus services. If the Minister and his Department were really serious about encouraging bus patronage, he would be proposing expenditure on bus lanes, bus priority measures at traffic lights, and targeted parking enforcement at bus stops and along bus routes, all of which would bring a better return than the measures that he has so far announced.

On his appointment, the Minister made some encouraging noises about co-ordination. Will he accept from me that he would get a better response from London Members if he brought forward better measures to tackle the city's chronic transport congestion rather than an inadequate and short-sighted scheme which will lead to more cars, more lorries and more pollution?

Mr. Norris: I think that I can answer all the hon. Gentleman's points. On the point about business, it is true that Islington produced some figures on business which

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showed, not entirely surprisingly, that there had been some drop in business in the past year among shopkeepers in Islington. The hon. Gentleman is probably aware, however, that the research conducted by the Department to determine business improvement of deterioration was conducted on the most sensible basis of all—a simple survey of patronage. The hon. Gentleman may also be aware that the greatest drop in patronage occurred in that section of the proposed red route which Islington council, for reasons of its own, chose not to implement as a red route.

The hon. Gentleman may be aware, too, that the second greatest reduction in patronage occurred on a section of the red route where we had provided free parking spaces where absolutely none had existed before. There is no evidence whatever of loss of patronage. I suspect that in due course the traders of Islington will come to see that that is entirely correct.

The hon. Gentleman talked about safety. A couple of weeks ago in the House the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) made the extraordinary suggestion that the reason why there had been such a spectacular reduction in accidents on the red routes was that traffic speeds had become so great that people were scared stiff of going near the road. That seemed to be the most extraordinary scraping of the barrel.

The truth is that because red routes manage traffic sensibly it is possible to combine modest improvements in speed—from 11 to 14 miles per hour approximately, which would not exactly worry Nigel Mansell——

Mr. Snape: Or the Minister's BMW.

Mr. Norris: or, indeed, my BMW—with significant reductions in accidents.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned traffic calming measures. On the pilot route, the Department deliberately experimented with all the available traffic calming measures that it is proposed to use. Not all of them would necessarily be employed on every mile of the network once the full 300 miles are in place, but certainly appropriate traffic calming measures are part of the red route proposals and will, of course, be funded by the Department in the usual way.

There is more traffic on the red route—about 11 per cent. more—but when one examines that 11 per cent. it is interesting to note that 9 per cent. derives from traffic which was previously rat running on roads parallel to the red route. Those cars are attracted on to the red route and away from the residential rat runs. There is an addition of about 2 per cent. in overall use. I do not believe that that is any cause for concern. It is part of the red route philosophy not to increase the capacity of roads, but to use any excess capacity to provide parking where possible.

Lastly, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for suggesting that I am, indeed, trying to make positive noises about how bus priority measures can encourage more use of public transport and thereby help to prevent congestion. Buses are not the cause but the victims of congestion. As the hon. Gentleman will know, a substantial programme of bus priority measures is already under way in my Department, not all of which have yet been taken up by the boroughs. I am keen to encourage such measures in future years because they represent excellent value for money.

Mr. Peter Brooke (City of London and Westminster, South): I give my hon. Friend the Minister the benefit of the doubt about the benefits that will flow from his announcement, but the perception of my constituents is very much the opposite. Although the benefits may become apparent, in the short term there will be massive disappointment, notably among residents in Pimlico, about Belgrave road. Will my hon. Friend give an assurance that the Department will monitor closely what happens and that if it turns out that it was wrong it will be prepared to amend its proposals at a later date?

Mr. Norris: Of course, if the Department is wrong it will change its mind, as Departments always do. More to the point, my right hon. Friend is absolutely right that, for reasons best known to other political parties, people used red routes as a political stick to beat Conservative candidates, especially during the general election. The basis of their attack was frequently gross misinformation about what red routes were.

Belgrave road is included in the network, but the amount of change will be slight and I have no doubt that overall it will be of great benefit to those who live and work there.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Many people will need persuading that red routes mean a green Government. As the right hon. Member for the City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) said, the reality is that many of our constituents in inner London, especially small businesses which have suffered from higher rates, higher rents and the recession, fear that the red routes will put them out of business altogether. Given that red routes are presumably part of a wider Government strategy, which should aim to reduce the number of vehicle journeys and vehicles on the roads of London, does the Minister accept that he should not implement the designated routes nor proceed with details —such as whether there should be one yellow line or two and the siting of parking spaces—until he has read the report on consultation on traffic management in London, which ends tomorrow and began in March, and until he has met people affected by the proposals in my borough and elsewhere?

Mr. Norris: On the fears of business, I suspect that during difficult trading times business people at every level will cast around for the things that the Government do to them that they think might harm their businesses. That is not unnatural or unreasonable but, in the only case that matters—where the red route has been established—there is no evidence that there has been any deleterious effect on business.

The hon. Gentleman is right that it is desirable to reduce the overall quantum of private vehicles. That will be achieved in two ways: first, by tempting people out of private cars and on to more efficient public transport, which is demonstrably quicker than the private car at getting them where they want to be, and that is what bus priority measures are intended to do. Secondly, to reinforce what I said earlier, part of the concept of red routes is not to increase capacity but to streamline use of the road. For example, we shall use any extra capacity for parking, to make community life more acceptable, rather than to push more cars down the road.

If the hon. Gentleman had listened to my statement, he would have heard me say that there will be an opportunity

for consultation when the traffic director produces his plan following the original proposals, and when detailed plans are drawn up with each borough.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I entirely welcome my hon. Friend's statement. Can he give some sign to the House of when designation will be provided for the A2 and A20 roads which serve south east London and thereby north west Kent? Red routing those roads would give my constituents, and many thousands of constituents served by my Kentish colleagues, the chance of a decent, short journey into work.

Mr. Norris: I have announced the present network, which will come into force towards the end of next year. I am always happy to consider representations from any quarter, especially from my hon. Friend. However, I also made clear that, because of my concern that red routes are not the only answer to congestion in London, there will be other opportunities for consultation on, for example, major bus routes, which I hope will also be of assistance to my hon. Friend and to his constituents.

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): Is the Minister aware that in my constituency there has been a great deal of protest from local residents and businesses about the Archway red route pilot scheme? Many local businesses have closed. Local business people to whom I have spoken blame the red route for that difficulty. Are not red routes bad for the community and for local businesses?

Mr. Norris: I do not want to be flippant and merely to say no, but no is the answer to the hon. Lady's question. She says that many people in Archway road protested vigorously about red routes. Many of those protests were made before they understood what the pilot meant. I am sure that the hon. Lady will accept that I have travelled on the route many times since I have taken responsibility for implementing the larger network. As more people recognise that, on the Holloway road section, for example, the road is an infinitely more acceptable local community road than it was before—it is now much safer to cross —people, whether they are traders, residents, pedestrians or bus users, will realise that red routes are a considerable advantage to the community. I expect that to be the case on the Archway road and elsewhere on the 300 miles of the network.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): Is the Minister aware that there will be dancing in the Fulham road tonight? Indeed, he will be the toast of SW6 this evening. My constituents are extremely grateful that the Fulham road proposal has been dropped, that he has listened to their arguments and, in particular, that he has shown that the Government are a caring and listening Government when it comes to these proposals. Will he confirm that the change in the red route proposals does not mean any dimunition in his determination to improve London's bus services, and in particular bus services in west London?

Mr. Norris: I doubt whether I shall often have that sort of approbation from any quarter of the House and it is welcome on my first foray. I am grateful to my hon. Friend and even more grateful to those who will be dancing in the Fulham road tonight. However, they should be aware of the traffic hazards of dancing there rather than in residential roads adjacent. My hon. Friend is right to point out that red routes do not in any way diminish our interest in a bus priority. I have often made it clear that giving buses an easier, more effective path on which to complete their journeys is in many ways the best way of all of tempting many private motorists out of their cars and on to the public transport network. Buses are not the cause, but the victims, of congestion.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): When the Minister says that there is no evidence whatever that businesses on the pilot red route which runs through the middle of my constituency have suffered, he is wrong and, I suspect, deliberately so. The Department of Transport's so-called survey, to which he referred, consisted of two officials standing on a street corner trying to do a head count of people going in and out of the shops on Upper street. That is not a scientific or accurate way to assess the impact of the red route. If the Minister had talked to local business men and gone and seen the evidence that they and I have seen with our own eyes, he would know of the fall in trade that has resulted. If he talked to local residents, he would know, too, that they do not appreciate or like the red route. If he took care not just to look at his papers and bogus surveys but to talk to the people affected, he would know that the red routes should be scrapped, not extended.

Mr. Norris: I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is hooked on his original opposition to red routes and now that they are patently successful finds himself in a somewhat embarrassing position. My Department has no difficulty in presenting the evidence of the patronage survey. Its conclusions are clear: there is no demonstrable link whatever between red routes and any reduction in business. I do not doubt that business has reduced over the period—I suspect that there may be several reasons for that—but, as I said earlier, there is no evidence whatever to link red routes with any reduction in business.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Is my hon. Friend aware that the sort of people who are now objecting to red routes are the same sort of people who 20 or 30 years ago objected to the introduction of single and double yellow lines, which practically everyone now accepts are essential?

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend has made his point extremely effectively and I entirely agree with him.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): Does the Minister recall an answer that he gave to me two days ago about traffic volumes and speeds in central Greenwich, revealing that the average speed of vehicles even in off-peak day time is only 11½ mph? Does he recognise that that has no relationship whatever to the measures involved in red routes because there is not a parking problem, but an excessive congestion problem in that area? Does he further recognise that any effective solution depends on measures to reduce the volume of motor traffic and to encourage the use of public transport systems? Will he therefore recognise that the red route initiative is not the solution to London's traffic problems? Will he introduce measures to improve the reliability and frequency of bus and train services to meet the needs of public transport?

Mr. Norris: In the light of the questions that the hon. Gentleman has asked today and previously, I should have thought that he would be more interested in the two clear conclusions of the pilot scheme. The first was that average speeds have risen from 11 mph to 14 mph, which is not

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such a remarkable rise as to constitute any hazard. The other conclusion was that the accident record on the red routes is little less than spectacular. There has been a 36 per cent. reduction in accidents during the pilot period.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Does my hon. Friend agree that the benefits of the red routes include a reduction in pollution and casualties, improvements in bus, cycle and pedestrian facilities, and the transfer of traffic from residential side streets to the through routes? Does he agree that it is important to understand that the red route is not a uniform 24-hour-a-day scheme? It is a framework within which one can operate sensible and flexible enforcement of parking regulations to allow for all the business, residential and commercial needs of the frontages and the needs of the people who use the routes. Therefore, one can put at rest the concerns which have been wildly exaggerated by the Labour party.

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend's summary is entirely right and fair. The key to red routes is that they do not seek to solve problems which do not exist.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the Minister not realise that the coincidence of his statement on red routes and his emphasis on buses will cause great cynicism in West Ham, where London Transport today announced the closure of the large West Ham bus garage, which has served public transport for nearly a century? Does he not realise that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) said, London wants a co-ordinated public transport system, and that the imminent privatisation and deregulation of buses will make things worse in London? The red routes are an expensive addition to bureaucracy, which will not provide the answers that we want.

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. Bus patronage on the red routes increased by 3 per cent.—1,700 more people every week use the number 43 bus. London Transport is considering the introduction of an express bus because the red routes facilitate more effective public transport. I thought that that was something that the hon. Gentleman would want to encourage.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I congratulate the Minister on his commitment to bus priority measures and to improving the quality of public transport in London. Does he accept, however, that, important as buses are, it is even more important to improve the reliability and qualitity of the London Underground and its existing routes, such as the Northern line?

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend will know that, in the next three years, about £3·7 billion is committed to the enhancement of London Underground, as part of our commitment to a decently modern metro. My hon. Friend knows of my concern for the Northern line and that London Underground proposes that it should be the next after the Central line to benefit from substantial upgrading.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May I say, on behalf of the London group of Members of Parliament, that we can probably do business with the Minister on this and other issues? However, is he prepared to talk to the representatives of small businesses in London, particularly the London Chamber of Commerce, so that he can hear at first hand what they say about the loss of business? Will he also speak to the police about the need for more traffic wardens? The police have said that the number of traffic wardens should be increased from 1,800 to 2,200 in order effectively to police red routes as well as double yellow lines and other parking restrictions. Unless the Government provide more resources, the red routes will not work.

Mr. Norris: I have already undertaken to meet both groups that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. I hope that we shall be able to work constructively on issues such as traffic management, which should not be party-political issues, but common-sense ones. On enforcement, the hon. Gentleman is entirely right. Good enforcement is the key to the effectiveness of the red route network. I have arranged to see the commissioner to discuss that and I shall also discuss it with my colleagues at the Home Office.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that he will be toasted tonight not only in Fulham but in Kenley and Whyteleafe after his decision not to red route the A22 Godstone road? It is recognised that the A23 needs red routeing, as a result of congestion in Coulsdon, but will he confirm that that will not mean 24-hour no parking and disaster for the local shopkeepers?

Mr. Norris: I am happy to give my hon. Friend the confirmation that he seeks, and I am grateful to know that yet another area of London will be bathed in champagne ere nightfall. The Godstone road was excluded because there are no existing traffic measures there now. Where a problem does not exist, it is pointless to try to solve one, which is precisely why it was excluded from the definitive scheme.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): Is the Minister aware that so-called priority routes give no priority to the local community, to local business or to the environment? While we welcome extra resources going to London Underground, that is not a great deal of help for my constituents in Lewisham, East. Is he aware that for residents in the Downham area, many of whom are elderly and rely on local shops, the effect of the further collapse of local businesses will create even more difficulties for people living in that part of my constituency? What confidence can he give them that there will be better public transport as a result of his policies?

Mr. Norris: I do not accept the hon. Lady's assertion that there is no priority for the community. Indeed, I entirely reject it. Under the pilot scheme, there have been 17 new or enhanced pedestrian crossings, four new cycle points and entry treatments on all side roads. We have achieved substantial accident reduction. I do not know what is the hon. Lady's definition of enhancing the community, but mine suggests that this measure very much enhances the local community.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): As a regular user of two of the designated routes, I welcome my hon. Friend's announcement and the prospect of having a more straightforward drive to and from Westminster and my home constituency. He will appreciate that along some parts of the route, such as in my constituency, there are some concerns and perhaps misunderstandings about the implications of the red route. What will the consultation

process involve? For example, will it involve residents associations as well as chambers of commerce, and will he take into account the fact that some small businesses and shopkeepers do not belong to chambers of commerce but might also have views to express?

Mr. Norris: There are essentially two elements to the consultation that will now take place. On the general plan, there will be consultation on the overall plan and criteria to be drawn up by the traffic director. There will then be an opportunity for consultation as each borough, with the traffic director, draws up its detailed plans. That consultation opportunity will be available to the groups referred to by my hon. Friend, and I hope that they will consult and let their feelings be known at the appropriate time.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Is the Minister aware that the police in Waltham Forest have said that, although the number of accidents has gone down, the number of fatalities has gone up along red routes? Is he further aware that the borough council has made it clear that Grove Green road in Leyton is wholly inappropriate for red routeing because it is a residential area and red routeing will simply mean the generation of more commuter traffic coming into London? As his removal of routes has obviously followed representations from Conservative Members, may I ask him to show that he is even-handed by taking out a route when a Labour Member makes representations to him?

Mr. Norris: On the last point, the hon. Gentleman presumably knows that Hammersmith and Fulham council—for all that it appears to have adequate supplies of champagne—is a Labour authority. He probably knows, too, that Richmond upon Thames is a Liberal authority. He must also know that the inner London boroughs which lobbied me about the inner core network are in many cases Labour authorities. So the political complexion of an authority is of absolutely no relevance.

I can only restate the clear evidence that there has been a very considerable reduction indeed in the number of accidents on the red route, a reduction of about 36 per cent. compared with a reduction of 12 per cent. in London as a whole. As for dragging extra traffic on to the roads, a point to which I referred, there was about 11 per cent. extra traffic on the pilot route, but 9 per cent. had been rat running on roads adjacent to the red route and the other 2 per cent. was additional traffic. I do not believe that that will constitute the hazard that the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): As chairman of the London Conservative Members group, I thank my hon. Friend for his statement of clarification. I also pay tribute to the sensitivity of the consultation process begun by his predecessor, Christopher Chope, which my hon. Friend has now brought to a conclusion. My response to what was said by the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) would be to say that in my borough of Kingston upon Thames representations have been made equally by all parties for the A243 to be removed from the list. Obviously, the A243 was a case of, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." It was inappropriate and unnecessary to include the road in the original list of priority routes, and I am grateful that my hon. Friend has now accepted the sense of the arguments from all sides and removed it.

Mr. Norris: I know that Conservative Members will be grateful for my hon. Friend's kind words about Chris Chope, who did an excellent job in the Department—I hope that he will be back here soon, doing an equally good job.

What my hon. Friend said about representations having been made from all political parties, both for and against the proposals, is entirely right and underlines what I said earlier. His general observations are right, too—flexibility is the key in finding a solution appropriate to the problem rather than inventing a solution where a problem does not exist.

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): There will be no parties in Croydon, North-West tonight, and if the Minister comes to my constituency no one will ask him for the last dance. Nevertheless, in all seriousness I ask him to visit my constituency and talk to people and shopkeepers in Norbury and Thornton Heath, who fear the red routes' impact on local businesses. Shops will close as a result of the policy, and shops are vital to local communities. Will the Minister postpone the measures in Croydon and elsewhere and commission a full-scale environmental, social and economic impact statement? In all fairness, will he do that—and visit my constituency?

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman is repeating the same canards that have been enunciated by his hon. Friends, and he is equally wrong. There is no evidence whatever of any impact on the general economy, and a considerable amount of evidence that the overall community is greatly enhanced by such schemes. I believe that when the hon. Gentleman's constituents in Croydon see the impact of the red routes they will be even more impressed with the general performance of the Government—and that the hon. Gentleman's own tenure there may be short.

Mr. Dudley Fishburn (Kensington): Does my hon. Friend accept how welcome his proposal for a red route in my constituency will be? There it is appropriate, and traffic will flow more freely along the Cromwell road.

Does my hon. Friend further accept how doubly welcome was his wise decision to withdraw the proposal for a red route along Holland Park and Notting Hill Gate, where it would not have been appropriate? By accepting the wise and rejecting the foolish he has earned the gratitude of my constituents.

Mr. Norris: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind words, which simply underline the point that we have already made: where red routes are appropriate they have been designated, and where not, they have been excluded.

Mr. Keith Hill (Streatham): Is the Minister aware that his announcement will be greeted with horror and outrage in Streatham? Is he further aware that Streatham residents have well grounded fears that the red route through Streatham will split our community, damage local business and add to already unacceptable levels of pollution in Streatham high road? For all the much proclaimed success of the pilot red route scheme in Islington, can the Minister name one local community in London which will welcome the introduction of the red routes announced today?

Mr. Norris: The residents of Streatham will object to the introduction of red routes only if the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends go on enunciating the nonsense that we have heard from them this afternoon. Opposition

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Members are simply ignoring the evidence before them. If the hon. Gentleman's constituents in Streatham do not want a 36 per cent. reduction in accidents, or less pollution —because faster moving traffic pollutes less than static traffic—if they do not want the improvements available in pedestrian and cycle facilities, by all means; perhaps I have got them wrong. My view is that they will welcome those things, and that when they see the red route in action will realise that—with the greatest respect to the hon. Gentleman—he is talking nonsense.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): May I congratulate my hon. Friend on the speedy way in which he has tackled the issue? Is he including the notorious bottleneck on the Mile End road between the Blind Beggar and the Black Bear which causes serious hold-ups for my constituents travelling on the A12, A13 and A127, and for travellers going out of London on to the M25 and M11?

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend's constituents in Billericay will be substantially advantaged by the red route programme. As she rightly suggests, for many of them —particularly those travelling down the A13 and A12— traffic will move more quickly and they will be able to reach their destinations more speedily. I hope that she will accept that I shall have to consider the detailed points that she raised and write to her. She will understand that red routes are not urban motorways, but will allow traffic to move more quickly, efficiently and safely. I hope that she will tell her constituents in Billericay that nobody is suggesting that red routes are the answer to all our prayers.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Is the Minister aware of the tremendous opposition in my constituency of Tottenham to red routes, particularly in the Haringey Green lanes district, where there is a unique blend of Greek and Turkish Cypriot shops which depend on passing trade? Is he aware of the effect that red routes will have on those businesses? Can he confirm that the majority of those who responded during the consultation process were opposed to red routes in my district? Why does the will of the local people—the residents and shopkeepers —count for less than the will of those who pass through the district? Why has the Minister red routed only that part of the Green lanes district which contains Greek and Turkish Cypriot shops and not the section which contains British Home Stores, Marks and Spencer, and the shopping centre?

Mr. Norris: I am sorry, but I shall have to disappoint Opposition Members. There is no great secret about the matter. The hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) will know that the basis for consultation for the proposed route system was the primary route network. That is the cause of the Green lanes anomaly—as a result of an application, part of it is designated and part of it is not. I am considering whether it might be appropriate to extend the red route in Green lanes. I find it difficult to follow the hon. Gentleman's argument as he seems to be arguing both for and against red routes. There is no contest between locals and passers-through, and if the hon. Gentleman had listened sensibly and objectively to the statistical evidence available, he would realise that the red route scheme benefits both sections of society.

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): If the Minister would like to see people dancing outside the Churchill hall in Finchley road tonight, he should scrap the proposed red route there. If he is unwilling to accept my evidence, will he be good enough to accept the evidence that I have received from a consortium of small businesses in Finchley road which has stated that if the red route goes ahead it will be catastrophic? It is already difficult for commuters travelling along the Finchley road to acknowledge that there are communities on either side of it. It is already extremely difficult for many of my elderly constituents to cross the road at the designated crossing places; if the red route is imposed, it will be even more difficult. If the Minister would like to know what a community is, it is surely somewhere in which an elderly pensioner can cross the road to meet her daughter and grandchildren who happen to live on the opposite side.

Mr. Norris: The hon. Lady is right and has given a perfectly acceptable definition of an improved community. She is wrong to suggest that a red route will not deliver that. She should go and have another look at Archway road, which is not far from her constituency. If she does so with a clear mind, she will see the obvious benefits to pedestrians and others in the local community.

Ms. Jackson *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Has the Minister finished his reply?

Mr. Norris *indicated assent.*

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): There will be great opposition in Kennington, Clapham, Stockwell and the Oval to today's announcement. Will the Minister explain what the benefit is to the communities living in Kennington, the Oval or anywhere near the main road used by so many Members of Parliament travelling back home to their constituencies at night? How will it help people living in the community if commuters travel that little bit faster?

Mr. Norris: The first thing that the hon. Lady should know is that the concept of the red route scheme does not suggest that it should last 24 hours a day, seven days a week. A red route would make little or no difference to hon. Members leaving the House late at night. The advantages to the hon. Lady's constituents will be those that I have enumerated from the Dispatch Box several times this afternoon: fewer accidents, less pollution from fewer stationary vehicles and from vehicles which, when moving, will do so more quickly, better access for pedestrians, and more cycle points. I do not know how many more times I shall have to explain to Opposition Members the clear advantages of the scheme. I suspect that the problem is that they simply do not want to listen.

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): Clearly, the Minister does not understand that it did not take any effort from Opposition Members to convince people that the red route system was not a good idea. When the pilot scheme was the only red route in existence, constituents from all parts of London came to us in overwhelming numbers to express their views. Community groups stated that the routes should be resisted at all costs. Is the Minister aware that people along the South Circular will regard the announcement as the latest attempt to shovel vast volumes of traffic on them as it follows on the heels of the south

circular assessment study? We are still awaiting the subsidiary recommendations of that investigation. Communities will be rent asunder by a scheme which is designed—as it is obvious to anyone listening to the statement—to get people from outer London through the inconvenience of inner London by degrading the lives of inner Londoners.

Mr. Norris: I believe that Opposition Members—who have cynically exploited people's ignorance of what the red route programme actually means and cynically ignored the available evidence to show that the routes are a considerable success—have been hoist by their own petard. They are in a difficult position and I sympathise with them. The hon. Gentleman cannot make a case against red routes out of the prospect that there may be a 2 per cent. increase in traffic on main roads which have been improved in order to accommodate more vehicles. His argument simply will not wash.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Does the Minister accept that the people of Hackney do not want red routes, which are at best a gimmick and at worst damaging to local businesses? They want money for the Hackney-Chelsea line so that there is a tube link to central London and they want bus conductors to be brought back so that mothers in Hackney can have help getting pushchairs on and off buses.

Mr. Norris: The hon. Lady may, for her own purposes, choose to dismiss red routes as a gimmick, but no one who takes an objective view of them will do so. They are a considerable aid to improved traffic management and traffic flow. The hon. Lady knows that the Department views the Hackney-Chelsea line scheme with considerable approbation, and is considering how to advance it as soon as possible—*[Interruption.]* From a sedentary position, the hon. Lady suggests that finance is an issue, and of course it is. She will appreciate that that is why we are already spending £3·7 billion over the next three years on the upgrading of the London Underground. One of the marvellous advantages to be gained from deregulating London buses will be that some operators may choose to offer a premium two-man operation service of which the hon. Lady can avail herself.

Points of Order

4.48 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. When Members are disappointed at not being called, I suppose they can be unreasonable, and I appreciate that the Speaker's lot is not an easy one when it comes to timing. However, I wish to raise a serious point of order which relates to the fundamental issue of Back Benchers' rights. We all value the system of business questions, because it may provide the only opportunity for hon. Members to raise important issues.

May I draw two facts to your attention? Last Thursday, at eight minutes past 4, you curtailed business questions at a time when a number of hon. Members wanted to ask questions. Despite having to endure a long speech from me on Mauritius, the House went on to the Adjournment at 8.45. It is unsatisfactory for a number of hon. Members to be denied prime time to put urgent points even though the House moves to the Adjournment at 8.45. The same thing happened on 14 May, when questions were curtailed at 3.59 and the House adjourned at 8.45. I am told by my indomitable friend the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), who is the deputy Chief Whip, that that has happened on several occasions and that he has made representations.

I understand, Madam Speaker, that of course you would say that, because the Government have asked for permission to make a statement, the ending of business questions is not up to the Speaker. That may be the case, but you have the authority to extend business questions as you please and the Government could wait. Secondly, I think that your advice from the learned Clerks would be that Mr. Speaker Selwyn Lloyd took the view that he would tell Ministers whether they could make statements. We have elected you to one of the most senior positions in this country; surely you can tell an Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Transport, not the highest factotum in the land, when he can or cannot make a statement.

There may be urgent matters leading to a request from the Prime Minister, the Head of Government. That is a different matter, but when a junior Minister asks to be allowed to make a statement, surely the Speaker of the House of Commons can say yea or nay. It should be a rule, as it used to be a convention, that there should be no statements on Thursdays. I do not doubt that the questions of my hon. Friends were important, but Monday is the transport day. Why could the statement not have been made between Monday and Wednesday rather than curtail business questions? This is all about Back Benchers' rights.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a related point——

Madam Speaker: Order. Let me first answer the hon. Gentleman. I assure him and the House that the Speaker does not have the authority to determine when statements are made. Although the hon. Gentleman was not delighted at a statement on a transport matter, hon. Members who represented the areas in question were pleased to be here to respond to the statement. In the last two Sessions, on over 30 occasions, statements were made on a Thursday, which, of course, is the day on which we have business questions.

[Madam Speaker]

As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, the Speaker's lot is not always a happy one. I have to judge and, on balance, decide when business questions should end. I take into account the number of people who are standing and the number of hon. Members who asked questions on previous business statements. I carry out a great deal of research on timing and Members' areas of interest before I draw business questions to a close. Finally, in ending business questions, I am not unduly influenced by the Government determining that they want to make a statement on Thursday. It has to be my judgment, and I make it in fairness and justice to the House and to all hon. Members.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This is on a completely different subject and relates to the Register of Members' Interests. Page 386 of "Erskine May" contains a relevant comment. Although the House has been in session for several weeks, there is no Select Committee on Members' Interests. The register is being compiled by the Clerk, but until the Committee is selected and meets, it cannot authorise the publication of a register for this Parliament. Until that register is published, it should be clear that, if a Member has an interest to declare before voting in the House or in the Committee, he must declare it. Page 386 of "Erskine May" states that the register can be sufficient indication of an interest and that a declaration does not have to be made. Plainly, in the absence of a register, a declaration will have to be made on every occasion on which it is necessary.

Madam Speaker: Much of what the hon. Gentleman says is correct, but the rule about declaration is rather separate from the subject of registration. This occasion gives me an opportunity to urge all hon. Members, especially those who are new, that when speaking in Committee or in the Chamber it is always wise at the beginning of what they have to say to declare any financial interest relating to the subject under discussion.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Further to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), with whom I normally agree. There has been a major move on business questions away from what was the "legitimate" question purely on the business as announced for the following week to Members raising almost any constituency matter with a request that it should be considered the following week. That difference has arisen over the years. Understandably, Leaders of the House used to dismiss such questions with the plain phrase, "Not next week," thereby discouraging the matter. Perhaps you would consider discontinuing or curtailing the change.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may recall that I recently made a firm statement asking Back Benchers to put only one question to the Leader of the House, so that I could call as many hon. Members as possible. I said that, if their questions were precise and to the point, and if the Leader of the House answered briskly, I would be able to call all those hon. Members who were standing.

Mr. Winnick: On this point, Madam Speaker, I know that in no way will you interpret my remarks or those of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) as a criticism of the Chair. When many Members are rising, you have to decide who to call. The business statement on Thursday provides a vital opportunity for Back Benchers to raise many matters, however inappropriate the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) might consider them. If we did not consider them appropriate, we would not raise constituency, national or international issues within the framework of the business for the following week.

There was one statement today. Will you be on your guard against two or three statements on a Thursday leading to a cut-off time for the business statement of 4 o'clock? That was the cut-off time today, but that is not a criticism, Madam Speaker. As far as possible, will you decide that 4 o'clock should not be the cut-off time, so that sufficient time will be allowed to call those who want to ask questions?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will have to leave that to me, but I assure him that 4 o'clock is not the bewitching hour.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Mr. Speaker Weatherill was accustomed to call every hon. Member who was standing to attract his attention during business questions. That did not happen every time, but it did on most occasions. That is what made business questions such a valuable item of business—I am not complaining, as I was called in business questions last week—because it meant that it was almost guaranteed that we would be called if we wished to ask a question. Is it your intention, Madam Speaker, to go back to Speaker Weatherill's normal custom and practice or do you intend to do what I believe that you have done in every business question time so far, which is to curtail questions while hon. Members were still rising to catch your eye? It would help if we knew that.

Madam Speaker: It is untrue that Speaker Weatherill at all times called all hon. Members who were standing. I am a long-standing Member of the House and I have watched proceedings carefully. As I said earlier, all hon. Members must leave it to my judgment. I am here to protect the interests and rights of Back Benchers, and I intend to do that. Let me make one point clear. Brisker questions from all hon. Members would help me enormously.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Madam Speaker—you will know that my questions are invariably very brief.

May I draw your attention to a report produced by the Select Committee on Members' Interests and to its implications? It has already been referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), and is the one that deals with the chairmanship of the Select Committees.

You will have noted today exchanges at the Dispatch Box. The Leader of the House is under pressure to table a motion to form the Committees, but when the Select Committee produced that report, it did so on the understanding that the House would have the chance to debate the report before Select Committees were created in the new Parliament because we wanted to avoid the difficulties that arose in the last Parliament, which led to the Chairman of one Select Committee being criticised.

As you protect the rights of hon. Members, Madam Speaker, will you put it to the Government that, if Parliament sets up a Select Committee and it makes such

critical recommendations, they should be taken into account by way of a substantive resolution before, as in this case, the Select Committee is formed?

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that this is a matter not for the Chair but for the Government. I see that members of the Treasury Bench are here and have no doubt noted what he said. We must now move on to debate the motion for the Adjournment of the House.

A number of hon. Members wish to speak in the next debate and unless speeches are limited on a voluntary basis, not all hon. Members will able to speak.

Science and Technology

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

5.2 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): The Government have requested a debate on science and technology today for two important reasons. I hope that the first one does not need stating. I know that I shall have the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) with me when I say that science is, or at least should be, an essential and central part of the national life. Apart from the select band of which he is a distinguished member, the House has not done enough to emphasise that. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House will welcome the debate. I should also mention two former Members, Sir Ian Lloyd and Sir David Price, who were among that select band that kept alive the flame of science, together with the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and others.

The second reason for the debate is that the Government have recently made important changes to the way in which they handle science and technology issues in Whitehall. The objective of the change is to give science and technology a higher profile at the centre of government. As my right hon. Friend the noble Lord Hailsham, the last Minister to hold the post that I now hold, said:

> "Scientists need a senior Minister to look after their affairs, not in the sense of running after them, but in the sense of being a friend at court."

That is how I define my task, and it is one that I shall relish. That is why the Prime Minister decided that an office of science and technology should be set up at the heart of Government.

I am grateful to the noble Lord Sherfield, whose voice has carried considerable weight on these matters for a number of decades, who said in another place last week that, in his view,

> "the outlook for policy making in science and technology is better now than it ever has been."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 3 June 1992; Vol. 537, c. 977.]

He believes that we have got the institutions right.

I hope that the Office of Science and Technology will provide a powerful central focus for science and technology. It has a budget of more than £1 billion. It is responsible for the science budget and the five research councils. It is headed by the chief scientific adviser, Professor Stewart, Fellow of the Royal Society, who is known to many in the House and is widely admired.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Minister clarify, at the beginning, what the new position of Professor Stewart is in relation to Sir Peter Kemp and others? Is it true that his position is downgraded? What is his position in relation to those who have grade 1A, like Sir Mark Richmond?

Mr. Waldegrave: There is no question of Professor Stewart's position being downgraded. I was just about to go on to say—I hope that this will make the position clear to the hon. Gentleman—that Professor Stewart retains his right to personal access to the Prime Minister, a right that chief scientific advisers have always had. I hope that that makes it clear that his national position, as chief scientific

[Mr. Waldegrave]

adviser to the Government, remains what it was. Sir Peter Kemp is the permanent secretary to my office and is administrative head of the Department.

I am glad to say—this relates to what might be another anxiety of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) —that the Prime Minister will continue to chair the ministerial committee on science and technology. The new office melds together the science branch of the former Department of Education and Science and the former science and technology secretariat of the Cabinet Office into a strong science policy unit. It is responsible for the Advisory Board for the Research Councils and the Advisory Council on Science and Technology. I also have the ministerial support of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, who has wide knowledge of science issues from his time at the Department of Education and Science, and from his constituency.

Science and technology issues cut right across government, and it is only sensible for the Government to take a central perspective on these issues. Above all, we need to focus on the output of our research and development programmes. Government funding in this, as in other areas, is necessarily limited. Therefore, the policy would benefit from an across-the-board look. What is important is not the individual interest of one programme, one Government Department or one pressure group. The real strength of the new Office of Science and Technology is the ability to bring together all Government support for science and technology in a way that maximises the national interest.

As a nation, we must ensure that we produce the people whom we need both to sustain that science base and to contribute to the wider economy. To this end, I shall be working closely with colleagues, including my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, whose Department will continue to be responsible for its schemes to promote technology transfer and innovation. I shall be looking at how we can provide maximum benefit from the substantial resources that Departments devote to research and development without falling into the trap, long ago identified by the late Lord Rothschild, of trying to direct from the centre, throughout the Departments, an integrated jumbo plan for science, which would be unachievable and would lead to far too much centralisation. There may be some, like the hon. Member for Linlithgow, who will be aware of the fact that I feel the shade of the late Lord Rothschild, for whom I worked when he produced his report, sometimes peering over my shoulder. That is not always a reassuring arrangement.

My job is to see that arrangements for applying science in Departments are properly carried out. My responsibility is to scan the arrangements in the Departments and, if necessary, engage in dialogue with Departments where I think that there may be weaknesses, or where I believe that priorities are not being identified properly. I shall not give them an excuse to slough off their responsibilities for science and technology on to the centre. That would be a step backwards.

Mr. Dalyell: Does Lord Rothschild haunt the right hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is a benign ghost; a formidable but benign ghost.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I welcome the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to his new job and the creation of his new Department. In considering how the Government can receive the best advice on how to ensure that all Departments work together to advance the cause of science, does the right hon. Gentleman think that the time has come to set up a standing Royal Commission on science, such as that on environmental pollution, or that the Government should consider whether the Royal Commission on environmental pollution, which has done a good and well-respected job, could have its remit widened to encompass all matters of scientific advice and be charged with the permanent responsibility of deciding what should be considered and making public recommendations to the Government, Parliament and society?

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall come later to my proposals in terms of analysis and the generation of new proposals and new policies on a Government-wide basis. Before the House goes into the area that the hon. Gentleman raises —not that it is a matter for me—it may wish to consider its arrangements for Select Committees. That is not the Government's responsibility, but anything that the House does to help raise the profile of science and technology will be welcome.

The establishment of the new Office of Science and Technology provides a valuable opportunity to shape science and technology policy in the United Kingdom for the years to come. As I have already seen, the arrangements make sense from an international perspective. For the first time for many years we have a Minister who can meet on an equal footing other European and international representatives of science and technology in their countries. I had an opportunity to do exactly that at a meeting of the G7 science Ministers at Leeds castle recently, the so-called Carnegie group. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry for being here today to represent his great Department's important responsibilities for technology transfer and innovation——

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): On his birthday.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am sure that the House will want to wish my hon. Friend well and many happy returns on his birthday.

It was, with all respect to my hon. Friend and other Ministers, including my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, somewhat confusing that at practically every international gathering a different middle-ranking or junior Minister represented British science. Therefore, representatives from other countries got to know a wide range of British Ministers, but were somewhat confused by our idiosyncratic approach to the matter.

That is brought into sharp focus because we are about to assume the presidency of the EC Research Council. I attended a meeting of the Council in Luxembourg at the end of April and look forward to chairing meetings of the Research Council during our presidency, during which time my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary will lead the British delegation.

That brings me to the EC research and development framework programme, which now involves annual commitments of some 2 billion ecu, which will take centre stage at the Council. The Office of Science and Technology will take the leading role in developing the United

Kingdom's negotiating strategy to ensure that the programmes have clear objectives, are properly evaluated and meet the United Kingdom's needs.

In particular, we shall soon be discussing with our European partners the shape and content of the fourth research and development framework programme. The United Kingdom is playing an active role in influencing the preparation of the debate. We were one of the first member states to submit a paper to the Commission on what the fourth framework programme should look like. I followed that up at the first meeting that I attended in April. I said that the emphasis should be on developing generic technologies with a broad range of applications in several industrial sectors, rather than subsidising research and development in specific industries.

That is not a call for an expansion of the EC research budget; that is already considerable and has grown rapidly in recent years. It is an attempt to introduce a more systematic and objective approach to deciding what the priorities for support within the funds available should be. Of particular importance is the need to scrutinise programmes to see what their outputs and benefits are. As with our domestic expenditure, we have to ensure that we are getting proper value for money and that the Community will benefit to the maximum possible extent. It will not be a secret to some hon. Members that we and other Ministers have in the past questioned the management of some EC programmes. Those views received an encouraging measure of support at the Council from a wide range of other countries.

We are taking a lead in developing those ideas within Europe and I shall be meeting Vice-President Pandolfi later this month. Professor Stewart has proposed to the Commission that the Community should develop criteria to help us identify the generic technologies that will be important for European industry during the next 10 years or so. That initiative should complement the United Kingdom's research activities. That will be discussed by the Commission and member states next month. Pursuing that theme will be a key objective during our presidency.

The United Kingdom can rightly take pride in its fine tradition of excellence in science and technology, a tradition which retains it full vigour. United Kingdom scientists continue to carry out science of world class. We are all aware of Stephen Hawking's outstanding work on the evolution of the universe and the nature of time. It was surely encouraging to those of us such as the hon. Member for Motherwell, South who, in his interesting open letter to me, emphasised the importance of raising the profile of science more generally throughout Britain—which I strongly support—that Stephen Hawking's book sold such a phenomenal number of copies, giving the lie to those who say that there is no interest in science in Britain. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and I both read the book and found it straightforward and rather easy.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Has the right hon. Gentleman observed that Stephen Hawking's ability to communicate depends on a sophisticated machine, the cleverest part of which is a transputer which was designed in Britain and is manufactured in Britain? How does he react to the news that an irrevocable decision has been taken and from next Tuesday the transputer will be manufactured in France and Italy?

Mr. Waldegrave: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on introducing his particular interest on such an effective side wind. The headquarters of INMOS is in my constituency, so I am well aware that that French-owned company is having to make some difficult decisions. However, it is clear that those decisions must be taken on a European-wide basis. Such a worldwide facility must base its decisions on the miantenance of a European facility for such production. I would not want to intervene in that decision, but I hope that the result is acceptable to the hon. Gentleman and to me. It would be wrong of us, when we are, as I hope many will say during the debate, seeking further integration of the European science based industry, to look too parochially at some of the decisions that then have to be taken.

I have referred to Stephen Hawking, but admirable work has also been done by others. Michael Green's superstring theories shed new light on the composition of matter and there is Alec Jeffrey's work on DNA fingerprinting. The United Kingdom has also made major contributions to work on gene therapy, which may in time offer a better quality of life to many people whose lives are at present marred, often tragically, as I used to see in my previous job, by diseases such as cystic fibrosis.

I was delighted to see that a recent authoritative study put the Medical Research Council's laboratory of molecular biology at Cambridge second of all such facilities in the world and first on some significant measures. That is quite a tribute.

As the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development draws to a close in Rio, we should also remember the important contribution that United Kingdom science has made to environmental research. I remember well that it was the British team in Antarctica who did the original work which discovered the ozone hole that appears over the Antarctic each spring. Subsequent work with European colleagues on the similar phenomenon over the Arctic had a major British content. British scientists are in the van in climate research. That has been consolidated by the establishment of the Meteorological Office's Hadley centre and the Natural Environment Research Council's James Rennell centre at Southampton. The United Kingdom also has a commendable reputation for underpinning work in the area of biodiversity with such institutions as the natural history museum and the Royal Botanic gardens at Kew.

Mr. Dalyell: The Chancellor will recollect that I had two Adjournment debates on the natural history museum. Is he satisfied that the maintenance of the collection of 25·5 million specimens, going back to the time of Captain Cook's voyage, is now adequately financed?

Mr. Waldegrave: The funding for the natural history museum still comes from the Department of National Heritage. The museum is happy with that arrangement, although I do not say that it could not spend more money. However, the hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the importance of systematic biology and taxonomy which, although perhaps not as eye-catching as some other science, underpin a great deal of work and are relevant to many of the biodiversity concerns which have been discussed in Rio.

Sir Gerard Vaughan (Reading, East): Does the research work carried out at the natural history museum come

[Sir Gerard Vaughan]

under my right hon. Friend's sphere of influence? Basic research goes on there into, for example, tropical diseases and marine biology.

Mr. Waldegrave: It depends. There are two ways in which my responsibilities can be fulfilled. I have responsibility for the research council budgets. If project funding came from a research council, it would come through my budget, although it would be validated by scientists and not by me. The chief scientific adviser will want to take into account the broad priorities of science as part of the general picture of the work done.

The credit for the work I have mentioned goes to the scientists concerned and I know that the House will want to applaud them. The Government's role is to help to establish the conditions in which such achievement can flourish. The Government have sought to do that, both in their education policies and in their funding of the science base. There have been some major and beneficial changes in recent years, of which we have yet to see the benefit. All people up to the age of 16 in maintained schools now study science, mathematics and technology. Since 1979, there has been a huge increase in science and engineering graduates coming out of the higher education institutions. Substantial resources for science have been made available by the Government in recent years, consistent with meeting our other priorities.

I do not want to bandy statistics with the House, but I point out that over the past decade there has been an increase of roughly 25 per cent., after inflation, in the United Kingdom's science budget—the specific budget for which I am now responsible. Government funding for higher education has increased in real terms since 1989-90. The rising profile of the science budget over the next three years will, importantly, give the research councils an excellent basis for the planning and management of their research programmes, which they welcome. By 1994-95, the Government plan to spend about £3·5 billion on civil science and technology, an increase of a useful 3 per cent. in real terms over spending in 1991-92.

Scientific achievement is not simply a matter of spending. The key, as ever, is how to achieve the best results from the resources available. A study by the Institute for Scientific Information in the United States —I know that there are other ways in which to measure scientific achievement, but bibliometrics, as I have learnt to call the study of publications, is one way—shows that, during the 1980s, the United Kingdom remained second only to the United States in the number of scientific papers published and their citation by scientists. That shows that the output and quality of the United Kingdom science and technology base remains extremely high. However, the picture is not all rosy.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): The Chancellor has made an interesting observation about the output from our scientific community. In my constituency, there are two important establishments which are part of Liverpool university. One is extremely well known to the President of the Board of Trade, because he takes advice there from time to time on matters relating to trees, and the other is an important veterinary school. The academics at that institution have bombarded me recently with pleas for help. Questions have been passed to the Department for Education about their working conditions and the deterioration of morale in the institution.

That does not seem to square with the picture of the future that the Chancellor has elaborated. I should be grateful if he would pass on those observations to his colleagues in the Department for Education, with the added weight of the fact that the President of the Board of Trade has a direct interest in one of the establishments.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for intervening. I know a little about the veterinary side, because one of the other three centres, after the reorganisation of the veterinary schools, is in Bristol. Although that reorganisation was painful, it was right. Support for science involves making difficult decisions which sometimes involve concentration. As a Member of Parliament who represents a university seat, as the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) is, I am aware that there is a question of morale in the science community and I hope that a great deal of my speech today will address that.

I was going on to say that there are problems. Some of the issues we shall have to face in the period ahead will concern the question whether, as well as very much increasing the output of science and technology graduates, we have clear enough institutional arrangements for developing a career structure for those whom we need to keep within science. At the same time, we must make it clear to many of those who will not find a full-time career in academic or research science that they are extremely valuable members of the community who should find more senior posts in industry, in the City and in the House where we could do with a few more scientists. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston for bringing his expertise to our debates, which will be a benefit.

Sir Peter Emery: I agree that there is a lack of scientific knowledge in the House. May we assume from my right hon. Friend's remarks that he welcomes what the Select Committee on Procedure recommends—that there should be a departmental Select Committee working with his Department? We could then further a greater knowledge of science and technology in the House with a degree of criticism—I am sorry, I mean not with a degree of criticism. We could work with his Department to further a greater knowledge of science and technology, which all hon. Members would like.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend's intervention was much improved by the insertion of the word "not". This is a matter for the House, for the usual channels and for those other mysterious and scientific bodies. I hope that the House will take some steps to reflect the change in departmental organisation. Anything that Parliament does to raise the profile of science must be welcomed by all hon. Members.

Mr. Dalyell: How does the Secretary of State respond to the Royal Society of Chemistry, which, incidentally, has a very valuable pairing arrangement with Members of Parliament? It said that 20 per cent. of chemistry A-level students were found to be taught by people who were not directly qualified in the subject and that one in 20 school science teachers have no higher education qualification in science. Is that not a serious point?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman makes a serious point, although it is not directly within my responsibility. Surely the very fact that we are now increasing the output of graduates in the science subjects gives us the opportunity to correct the long-standing imbalance. I remember that the position was roughly the same 10 years ago when I worked in the Department of Education and Science. We now at least have the manpower and womanpower to correct the situation if those graduates can be found jobs in the teaching profession.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Does the Chancellor intend to recommend that a Select Committee should be set up?

Mr. Waldegrave: I must tread carefully. I should not be thanked either by the House or by others who are more experienced in these matters than I if I were to recommend that the House should set up a Select Committee. Points of order might be raised in all parts of the House. Nevertheless, I look forward to having a productive dialogue, however the House may organise it. I should be surprised if a Select Committee were to be set up. If, however, the House comes to that conclusion, I hope that it will bear in mind that there is a powerful Select Committee on Science and Technology in another place. My Department is very small. If there should be two Select Committees, I hope that they would organise their work in a co-ordinated way so that not all the time of my officials was spent upon dealing with them.

I am grateful for those interventions, because I was about to deal with those areas where the picture is not so rosy. Hon. Members seemed to be anxious to keep me off that part of my speech, which is unusual. It is not enough just to invent. The key is to translate the invention into innovation, where it really counts—in the marketplace. It is in that area that we have undoubtedly been less successful than our competitors. Collaborative programmes such as LINK and EUREKA have grown and are contributing to the commercialisation of long-term research. There are now 30 LINK programmess involving a considerable sum of money—£350 million, of which half comes from the Government. Some results seem to be winning through.

In the case of EUREKA, which encourages European collaboration closer to the market, the United Kingdom had the highest number of new projects announced at the recent ministerial conference—43 projects. That is considerably more than either France or Germany. That is encouraging. However, we need to consider carefully what more can be done. Ultimately, it is the success of our companies in innovating and competing successfully that will provide the wealth that is required, not just for them but for Governments to plough back into research. Without the successful commercialisation of innovation, we shall inevitably slip further behind our competitors.

My party's election manifesto said that we would encourage the establishment of centres of technological excellence linking industrial research organisations with universities and polytechnics. Officials are examining how that might best be achieved—for example, taking into account the proposals from the working group on the Prince of Wales's innovation initiative for the establishment of intermediate Faraday centres.

My Department and the Department of Trade and Industry, working together, have already addressed one aspect. Last week the Government announced five pilot partnerships between higher education institutions and industrial research organisations which will enable postgraduate students to undertake their studies on work of direct interest to industry in organisations that deal with a wide range of industrial problems.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): There will be a broad welcome in all parts of the House for the Faraday centres, but how does the Chancellor relate to the Scottish Office in this respect? Of the five establishments that were announced, none was in Scotland. It is a source of mystery to me how his new office relates to the Scottish Office and how innovation would take place in Scotland within this framework.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am responsible for the research councils' budget. That is a national budget. The research councils place project money with the higher education and other institutions throughout the United Kingdom. In that sense, I have a national responsibility. On a lighter note, the chief scientific adviser comes from the island of Islay in the western Hebrides, so I am not allowed to go very far wrong. My responsibility is to co-ordinate these matters with the territorial Ministers.

I believe that the improved arrangements will help. Coupled with the co-operative awards in science and engineering studentships, the new engineering doctorate and the teaching company scheme, there is now a range of opportunities for students to be directly involved with industry at a formative stage in their careers.

Proposals for intermediate centres go further than that. They embrace a partnership seeking to encourage more industrially relevant research and to help the two-way flow of ideas as well as people through the innovation chain. Such technology transfer is, of course, very important. We recognise, however, that the creation of intermediate centres of excellence would not be the whole answer. It is necessary to ensure that all levels of industry have ready access to sources of advice and help appropriate to their needs.

This must be seen in a local and regional as well as a national context. The needs differ between types and sizes of firms and, as well as access to new technology, there is much current proven technology which can be transferred with advantage between sectors and from larger firms to their smaller counterparts. We are also examining how this technology transfer can be improved and ways in which other mechanisms can be linked to the intermediate institute concept.

The United Kingdom has a commendable record of achievement on science and technology, but we need to build on our strengths and also learn from those of our competitors. In the months to come, I shall be carrying out consultations with the scientific community and with industry on how the United Kingdom's fine record on science and technology can be further improved. In this area, as in others, there are clear advantages in exchanges of views, pooling of priorities and wide consultation. I have already seen a number of the key players in the scientific community, such as Sir Michael Atiyah, president of the Royal Society and a number of scientists eminent in their own fields. I have also had a useful and constructive meeting with representatives of Save British Science. In this consultation there will be a crucially important input from Government Departments with

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strong interests in science and technology, above all the Department of Trade and Industry but also other Departments such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Health. We shall continue to consult widely to help form views on the way forward.

Over the coming months, we shall be seeking the views of a wide range of individuals, companies and other groups. Today's debate is the first important stage in this consultation process and I look forward to listening to what hon. Members have to say.

The questions that we shall be asking of the science community, of industry, of this House and of another place, and of informed commentators must include these: do the Government have the right advisory structures at the centre? The Advisory Board for the Research Councils and the Advisory Council on Science and Technology play important advisory roles respectively on the science budget and on science and technology generally. There are also my own advisers in the Office of Science and Technology.

Next, do we have the right links between academia and industry to encourage to the optimum exploitation of the science base? I have already mentioned that we are examining initiatives to bridge the gap between the higher education institutes and industry, as proposed in our election manifesto.

The amount spent on research and development in industry funded by industry rose by 37 per cent. between 1983 and 1990. None the less, it is still in industry's research and development contribution that we lag internationally behind some of our competitors. How can industry be encouraged to match the best of our international competitors in terms of the resources it devotes to R and D? Why are there such huge differences between the R and D committed by different industries?

We have very good basic science in Britain. We seem to have a rather poor record, with some notable exceptions, in the transfer of science to the marketplace. Is this because we are working in basic science areas which have turned out to have less marketable derivatives than those pursued by our rivals?

Mr. Dalyell: What is the position of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils?

Mr. Waldegrave: The ABRC's position is as it was, except that it is now responsible to me rather than to the Secretary of State for Education. It is the advisory body, though not with a statutory base, which advises me on the distribution of money to the research councils.

Is it because we have been less good at support for whatever we like to call the science in between basic and applied—strategic, or generic, or whatever? Should there be more, or less, Government leadership in that area? Are our training opportunities in science and technology for our industral work force—which have steadily improved—yet good enough? Is my own instinct—that the status of our engineers and scientists is not high enough—correct? If it is, what can be done about it?

Next, we need to pay full attention to the international dimension of science. Do we get enough out of international co-operation, particularly in the European Community? Could we do more to help us secure the optimum R and D for our money and the best useful fit with our national programmes?

Do we get the very best value for money out of the substantial expenditure we devote to science and technology? We need to ensure that there are adequate systems in place for concentrating resources on those areas that merit priority. Are we tough enough in facing down existing lobbies which may represent past priorities, whose pressure may prevent new developments which do not yet have effective lobbies?

I have learnt already that there are several answers to each of these, and other, questions, all offered with equal vigour. I propose to listen and think about the answers and I hope to talk to as many people as possible before I come to conclusions. This debate is indeed a start in the discussion I want to take place, but in due course we must reach some conclusions on which to base a strategy that will stand for a number of years, as chopping and changing policy in those areas is demoralising and wasteful.

Accordingly, the Government intend to publish a White Paper, probably in the early part of 1993, setting out ideas about the future of science and technology in this country—to be, of course, informed by what we shall have heard and what people will have told us. At present I feel that that may be largely organisational, although it will, I hope, discuss ideas about the exploitation of science and the application of technology. It will offer no panaceas, nor hold out promises that cannot be fulfilled. Very considerable resources are already available—resources to be measured, incidentally, not just in money but in terms of tradition, bricks and mortar, equipment and, above all, dedicated individuals. What we need to look at is how we can maximise the effectiveness of our arrangements so as to give the country the best value we can from those resources.

In taking this work forward, I shall be working closely with my colleagues across Government, and especially with my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, given his Department's important research and development programmes and wider responsibility for industrial innovation, and with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education, whose role in relation to the supply of scientists and engineers and in the management of research facilities in universities is crucial.

My aim will be to take stock of our achievements thus far in science and technology and see how we can build on them. The establishment of the Office of Science and Technology provides an excellent opportunity for doing so.

The creation of the Office of Science and Technology has been widely welcomed. I am grateful to those Opposition Members who have been generous enough to greet the changes in a positive way, and especially the hon. Member for Motherwell, South. Doubtless we will argue about the institutions, the priorities and the money. However, I hope that we can make common cause in the House about one matter: I believe that in spite of the efforts made in the past by the select band of friends of science in the House—I referred to some of them earlier and my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan) is another—there is still far too much ignorance of and even hostility to science in our country. It is becoming fashionable again to sneer at scientists and to blame them for ills which are in part the result of choices made by electorates and political systems.

Britain, of all countries, cannot afford an anti-science culture. We need to live by our wits as traders and manufacturers. Science and technology represent the application of those wits in their highest form. Part of my job is a normal ministerial one—to get the institutions and decisions reasonably right—but part of it is wider and can be achieved only with the help of the House and Parliament, of the media, of the schools, of indeed every thinking person in our country. It is to beat the drum for science and technology in Britain. We are one of the greatest of science nations. Rural, pre-scientific bliss—if it ever existed—is not an option now. We need to maintain our tremendous scientific strength and we need to use it even better. That, I hope, can unite us all.

5.43 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): I welcome this first speech by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in his capacity as science Minister and I congratulate him on his appointment as Minister responsible for the Office of Science and Technology. It is right to bring together in the Cabinet Office the responsibility across Government for science and technology issues, and the specific responsibility for the research councils.

I congratulate the Prime Minister on his good sense in adopting the Labour party's proposals. I hope that the new consensus will extend further to the content of science policy. That is certainly the overwhelming wish of the science and technology community in both industry and academia. However, that consensus will last only if the Minister can develop a coherent strategy and secure the resources to carry it out, in so far as those resources come from Government. That coherent strategy must cover, most importantly, industrial research, but also the science base, medical, social, economic, environmental and defence research.

I listened carefully to what the Minister said, and I very much welcome the scope of his ideas and the direction on which he has embarked. He referred to forward plans for the science budget. He is aware that, in the normal course of events, those plans will be reviewed and the outcome will be examined with intense concern by a great many people in industry and in the scientific world.

I welcome the Minister's emphasis on output. I am sure that he has already read Edwin Mansfield's paper in *Research Policy* in February 1991, in which he estimated that the annual rate of return from academic and scientific research in the United States is no less than 28 per cent. per annum. No comparable estimate has been made for the United Kingdom, for the simple reason that the data do not exist on which it could be made. That is another area where the Minister needs to improve the basis of policy-making.

The Minister ended his speech with a number of questions that he is putting, and will continue to put, to the science community. Those are questions that I have been putting to the science community for a number of years. I hope that it will be of some assistance to the House, and perhaps to the Minister, if I cite some of the replies that I have received.

The Minister asked whether the Government needed a new advisory structure; whether we had the right links between academia and industry; and how industry could be encouraged to match the performance of our competitors overseas. He promised a White Paper in early 1993, which is probably about right, because it will allow time for consultation. I hope that he will extend the scope of its contents beyond the organisational, to include quite a substantial part of policy and strategy.

As the Minister said, the OST will need to work closely with other Departments, especially the Department of Trade and Industry—and, I would add, the Treasury. The Minister emphasised that link in other aspects of the work of his office, and it is equally important in the scientific area. He must positively encourage other Departments to take responsibility for research in their own areas. The OST can play a useful and acceptable role in stimulating effective departmental research, providing common research services, developing a science base and encouraging the adoption and transfer of new technology. It cannot expect to get the resources for the science base unless it makes that wider contribution throughout Government.

To play that wider role, the OST and the chief scientific adviser and his staff must be appropriately recognised. It was ludicrous that, before the election, the chief scientific officer was only a grade 2 post, whereas the Minstry of Defence chief scientist and the heads of the science and engineering and medical research councils were all grade 1A. In Whitehall terms, I understand from MOD sources, that meant that its chief scientist did not attend the chief scientific adviser's meetings. I hope that the Minister can confirm that he is either making or has made the chief scientific adviser a grade 1 post. The right hon. Gentleman suggested that the present incumbent of the post came from Islay; I always understood that he came from Barra. There is a deep and stormy sea between those two lovely islands.

The Minister and the chief scientific adviser will have to join in the submission of public expenditure bids for the research councils. However, they will also—as the chief scientific officer has already been doing—need to discuss with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury the research and development budgets of all Departments.

The apparent conflict of interest between being specifically responsible for the research councils while having the task of advising the Treasury on the distribution of research and development across the whole of Government and in particular Departments can be removed if it is recognised that, although the science budget has probably to lead total civil research and development in the short term, within two or three years the reality is that, without a coherent strategy, the science budget will lag behind the total civil research and development. The two are inextricably linked.

The weakness of advice and advocacy on the science budget in recent years, as pursued both inside and outside the Government, has been that it has been isolated from the mainstream economic and industrial policy-making of the Government. The OST has available, through the research that it supports, the information and analytical capability to present a more coherent case for science. If the Minister were to use that resource simply for the benefit of the science budget, his arguments would not be well received by his colleagues. He has to enable and encourage Government as a whole to use the information and analytical methods that the research community has developed without overselling or exaggerating its capabilities.

The reality, if we think in hard economic and industrial terms, that the Government must face is that, without a

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sustained improvement in non-price technological competitiveness, there is a substantial risk that the country will face acute balance of payment difficulties around 1996, forcing major increases in taxation, cuts in expenditure, and another major recession in the run-up to European monetary union. If Maastricht or EMU does not go ahead, the risk, of course, is likely to be greater because of the added uncertainty. *[Interruption.]* Have we resolved the question relating to Barra?

Mr. Waldegrave: The chief scientific adviser's wife comes from Barra.

Dr. Bray: How easy it is for matches to be made across even those stormy seas. The right hon. Gentleman has interrupted my chain of thought about the likely difficulties that we will get into if the improvement in technological competitiveness, which I accept has been making some progress in recent years, does not make much faster progress in the next few years.

To reduce the risk to more acceptable levels, the improvement in technological competitiveness needs to be sufficient to increase exports of manufactures at a compound rate around 2 per cent. per annum or £2 billion per annum faster than would be achieved by the growth in world trade and in relative prices. Some encouragement can be drawn from the recent improvement in exports of manufactures, to which all Ministers frequently refer, but at least as fast a pace as that needs to be maintained for a decade to see us out of the wood.

The OST, directly and through the research that it supports in the Economic and Social Research Council, is able to join the DTI and the Treasury in monitoring the improvement in technological competitiveness and following through its policy implications. That kind of economic assessment is hazardous, but it is an unavoidable undertaking. The Treasury does not regard the medium-term financial strategy and its short-term forecasts as a reliable guide to the medium term in general or to supply side effects. But it has no other way of treating them, and it is not putting any effort into developing any way of treating them.

The OST and the DTI are inescapably concerned with the medium term and with the supply side. Unless they are able to argue such matters, they will not get anywhere with the Treasury. They can succeed in their task only if they equip themselves to handle microeconomic policy and the links between it and macroeconomic policy at least as well as the Treasury handles macroeconomic policy. While the OST and the DTI are building their in-house capability in that respect—I have mentioned, for example, the ability to do exercises such as Mansfield's in the United States—they will need to use external capacity which, in any case, should be built up to service industry in general and company strategies.

Sir Peter Emery: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that there is a further problem? With the cut in defence expenditure, there is likely to be a further decrease in R and D which has been going into industry, which has increased the percentage of Government R and D expenditure across the board. That money should go into civilian R and D and not just be lost or gobbled up by the Treasury.

Dr. Bray: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right, but information on the extent to which that is happening is simply not available at the moment. I do not see how the Government can formulate a coherent policy on that matter unless they are able to follow the rates of technology transfer, the present state of technology in use and so on.

Sir Peter Emery: That point should be passed on to the Select Committee.

Dr. Bray: Indeed, that would help.

More widely, the Government need to find a big bang in manufacturing—some measure which would have a bigger and better effect on manufacturing industry in the 1990s than deregulation and the big bang had on financial services in the 1980s—not a black hole, but still less a white dwarf. The Government will wish to look in the same direction as they looked in respect of financial services, working through competition and the market rather than through subsidy.

The President of the Board of Trade is very sensibly talking systematically, as the Chancellor is doing, to a lot of people in different industries. I gather that, on Tuesday, he saw the chief executive officers of major chemical companies, and yesterday he saw City analysts who specialise in the chemical industry, and chemical industry trade associations. They have important roles, and often they have strong opinions, but the Minister's job is not to second-guess them. He has a different role. It is to ensure that the whole works effectively as a competitive system. The Minister has to carry industry with him, but if he is to succeed, sometimes industrialists will have to take a deep breath and take the plunge.

Competition works through information and disclosure. Firms do not always like either, but they are essential in an efficient market. The DTI, in its pursuit of that holy grail or big bang for manufacturing, could give notice that disclosure requirements will be greatly increased in, say, four years. That could include a requirement on firms to disclose costs and profitability on each product and market area, not only to competitors but to shareholders, employees, customers and suppliers.

That would give firms time to get their technology improved and get their costs down to globally competitive levels. New tertiary information businesses would develop a modern information economy—closer to that which exists in the United States, for example—to process that information into operationally useful forms that would sharpen competition and increase efficiency.

There is much current interest, growing fastest, as usual, in the United States, in the roles of information and strategic behaviour in industry. It is impressive to see how they operate in practical, down-to-earth ways in firms and industries which are rapidly improving their performance. For the United Kingdom, that somewhat cerebral approach would have to be packaged and sold—compare, compete and win strategies, perhaps—but Ministers and their consultants are good at that sort of thing.

Most firms pursuing effective strategies to increase their technological competitiveness have a number of requirements from the environment in which they operate. In this country, they are undoubtedly greatly handicapped by high interest rates. Firms borrow for other purposes than to invest in plant and machinery, but that is critical in improving technological competitiveness.

The high level of German interest rates, which is likely to continue for the next few years, was not anticipated when investment allowances were run down to reduce the rate of corporation tax. We may be able to reduce interest rates to a little below German rates but if we are to create a climate more favourable to competitiveness-improving investment, the case for increasing allowances for investment in manufacturing plant and machinery should be re-examined. The micro-to-macroeconomic case must be made by the DTI, with the support of the OST.

Training is also critical. The OST can give important support to the Department of Employment by ensuring that the local training and manpower policies of training and enterprise councils and local enterprise councils are well informed about the emerging technologies and skill requirements of local industry. That is a key area of information disclosure and micro-to-macro analysis in which steps could be taken immediately.

The strategy of a firm must be specific, operational and as simple as possible.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that there is a 100 per cent. tax allowance in the first year for research expenditure? Surely that is the greatest possible help that can be given to firms.

Dr. Bray: I shall talk about research and development tax incentives specifically in a moment. I was referring to the ordinary investment allowances in plant and machinery.

A firm's research expenditure must be seen in the context of its overall strategy and innovation policies. It is useless to treat R and D expenditure on its own. The National Economic Development Council innovation working party did a useful job in producing a model innovative company and providing a tool kit which companies can use to develop their own strategy for innovation. Research and development and technology transfer have to fit into the wider framework.

Research and development are, however, of particular interest to the Chancellor, so I shall deal with that and technology transfer. International comparisons at the economy and industry level suggest that the minimum increase in civil research and development, consistent with the increase in technological competitiveness that we should seek, should be from its present level of 1·7 or 1·8 per cent. to 2·5 per cent. in five years.

Most of the increase needs to be in industrial research and development, with increases elsewhere to maintain a sustainable scientific effort. The effect would be to bring United Kingdom civil research and development in 1997 near the levels reached in Germany and Japan in 1987, from which they have since moved on. Put like that, it does not sound very ambitious, but it will take a great deal of work.

The point that the Chancellor made about the inadequacy of industrial research and development was illustrated dramatically by the research and development scoreboard published in *The Independent* on Tuesday. The ranking of companies by total research and development spend is sobering enough. ICI, the biggest United Kingdom spender, comes only 35th in the world league. Only 22 British companies spend more than £50 million a year on research and development.

However, when one looks more closely and chooses matching pairs of companies, looking at research and development as a percentage of sales to correct for differences in size, Britain certainly does well in chemicals and pharmaceuticals. Let us compare the percentage of sales spent on research and development: ICI 4·77 per cent. compared with Du Pont 3·36 per cent.; Glaxo 13·98 per cent., compared with Merck 11·48 per cent.; Wellcome 14·30 per cent., compared with Schering 15·16 per cent. But then things begin to slip: GEC 7·20 per cent. and Siemens 10·81 per cent.; British Aerospace 2·49 per cent. and Boeing 4·83 per cent.; BP 0·94 per cent. and Elf 1·94 per cent.; Unilever 1·84 per cent. and Procter and Gamble 2·91 per cent.; British Telecom 1·95 per cent. and AT&T 4·94 per cent.

Certainly there are qualifications to be made, but, equally certainly, the general picture is inescapable. How can British industry expect to compete technologically when it spends so much less on research and development than its overseas competitors?

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Will my hon. Friend give the House the benefit of a comparison between ICI and Hanson, which wished to take over ICI? Hanson's expenditure on research and development seems to tell the story of British industry in one, yet that company wanted to take over ICI.

Dr. Bray: Thankfully, that argument played an important part in fighting off Hanson and stopping it from pursuing its interests in making a bid for ICI. Mercifully, that danger has been removed for the time being. I agree with my hon. Friend that the behaviour of the conglomerates in supporting research and development needs careful examination.

A way of reducing the inadequacy of the general level of research and development in industry is to introduce a tax credit. It is a neutral and efficient way of achieving that aim. Previous Government rejections of research and development incentives seem to have been based on the out-of-date Inland Revenue survey "Fiscal Incentives for R&D Spending" published in March 1987. The literature that was reviewed in that survey led to the redesigning of fiscal incentives on more effective lines, especially in the United States and Australia.

The Opposition's proposal is for a 25 per cent. tax credit. It is not a tax allowance. It is on top of the current 100 per cent. tax allowance which a normal business expects. A 25 per cent. tax credit should be introduced for the increment of research and development over a base year. That is close to the current United States scheme, and we are informed that it would be allowable within European Community rules.

According to estimates in a Brookings paper, the effect would be modest but useful, perhaps increasing business expenditure on research and development in industry by some £600 million, or 10 per cent., at a cost in tax revenues forgone of £100 million. Combined with other influences, the effect would, of course, be larger.

The introduction of a tax credit is an important step which I hope that the Government will consider much more carefully than they have done so far. There is also a good case for examining the general structure of technology transfer programmes, to which the Chancellor referred when he considered the Faraday programme. Certainly, the proposals made by the Prince of Wales working party on innovation would build wider bridges between basic science and industrial development. A

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comprehensive network of intermediate institutions would be established, linked to universities and developed from the former research associations, other contract research firms and Government laboratories.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) referred to the absence of any Scottish element in the proposals, but a good bid was put in by the national engineering laboratory of the Department of Trade and Industry and the university of Strathclyde. That was only one of many worthwhile proposals which were not brought into the scope of the pilot scheme.

Many of the intermediate centres would specialise in one industry or technology. The essential element of the Prince of Wales's working party's proposal is that, if the centres effectively combined contract research and postgraduate training, they would qualify for Government support for their own programmes of strategic research to underpin their contract research. That is not an element of the present pilot scheme being run in a few particular institutes.

If we take together all the ways of increasing industrial research to which I referred, and with natural growth, the expansion that normally takes place within a company, the research and development tax incentive and the Faraday and other DTI programmes, the total increase in research and development intensity would still leave British industry a long way behind our industrial competitors. The extra has to come from increased efficiency, competitive stimulus from increased disclosure, and synergy from the interaction of all the initiatives that the Government take and industry pursues. Those wider influences must therefore be taken seriously.

With a new dynamism in industrial research, and with new networks enabling the economy and society to innovate more sensitively, the need to strengthen the science base becomes inescapable. It has to produce the necessary flow of well-trained researchers and give access to the advances in the international science community on which industry and society depend. Japan, Korea and Singapore have learnt that—can we not learn it?

The dominant size of the science base in the United States and the more comparable efforts in France and Germany are relevant. The latest estimates are that, in 1987, academic and academically related research was 0·398 per cent. of GDP in the United Kingdom, whereas it was 0·496 per cent. in Germany and 0·453 per cent. in France. The declining trend in the past 20 years in the relative position of the United Kingdom science effort underlies the present deeply felt malaise in United Kingdom academic and academically related research.

Expenditure on the science base, as a share of GDP, needs to increase by 20 per cent. in the next five years, to the level in Germany and France in 1987. I urge the Chancellor of the Duchy to consider that measure, because it measures the number of scientists. Our performance during the past 12 years, and projected in the current Government expenditure plans, maintains the science budget as a constant share of GDP.

Support in research and funding council channels for a dual support system need to be increased. If the Chancellor of the Duchy is to get anywhere near the target that I set for five years hence, it will mean a £150 million cash increase in the science budget next year.

If the country embarks on that increase in research intensity and that major effort to improve the technological competitiveness of industry, we may well ask whether we will be run into a road block due to a lack of scientific manpower. The education system certainly needs to be improved, but there are sufficient reserves from the rundown of research and development and the rundown in defence research to maintain a high rate of growth in civil research and development.

We need to pay special attention to the professional development schemes launched by the Engineering Council, which need to be developed for research scientists. That is normal practice in good firms, but it is not pursued in the research community, the research councils or the universities. Such a systematic approach is needed to provide scientists with an attractive career structure.

The problems of the advisory structure, which the Minister mentioned, have to be seen against what he wants it to achieve. Does he want it to point the way to achieving the necessary improvement in technological competitiveness, or does he merely want it as a housekeeping operation, to maintain present levels of efficiency and improve them where possible, with the present resource use that industry is able to provide? He will come up with different answers as to what the advisory structure should be.

I agree with Conservative Members that, now that science and technology issues have been put under the responsibility of a single Minister and office, it is high time that we had a Commons Select Committee on science and technology. The Lords wish to continue with their Select Committee. It has been suggested that there might be some way to combine the two Committees, but while they could share common services, it is the view in both Houses that the Committees would need to function independently.

A different purpose is served by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology—a commendable initiative by Members from both sides of the House. A motion on the Order Paper requires the House to approve the use of Commons funds for its future development. However, the office is not a Select Committee and will not function like one—it will not report to the House or make recommendations on policy.

Another question concerns fundamental and baffling scientific problems, which are beyond the scope of laymen, where one needs to go to the best informed peer group to get an honest, unbiased view, in so far as that can be secured. I refer to such problems as the epidemiology of Aids, determining how fast the BSE epidemic is growing and whether it can cross species boundaries, and global warming. The Government, Parliament and the public are entitled to hear the scientific peer group's judgment, as free as possible from departmental and political interests.

The Chancellor referred to his conversation with the president of the Royal Society. I am sure that it would not be breaking a confidence if I were to point out that our proposal to the Royal Society that it should be invited by the Government to give wholly independent advice on scientific issues of major public importance was suggested to the Chancellor by the president, and I hope that he will give that careful consideration.

Mr. Waldegrave: I thank the hon. Member for giving way, as I want to comment on that matter immediately —perhaps I should have done so in my speech. Sir Michael Atiyah put his proposals to me for bringing together the Fellowship of Engineering and the royal colleges to advise the Government and the nation on such important issues, and I was able to tell him that I welcomed his initiative.

Dr. Bray: I welcome that, and hope that the Chancellor will follow through the expenditure implications. Continuing support will clearly be required to do the job properly and set the process free of day-to-day interference by Ministers or officials, which would bias the outcome of the work. I certainly welcome the suggestion that the Fellowship of Engineering should be included—we shall soon learn to call it the Royal Academy of Engineering —as well as the medical field.

In addition, the Government will need their own central advisory council. Surely the Prime Minister should preside over its annual review and special meetings, but in his absence the Chancellor of the Duchy should preside.

Scientists need to talk directly to the political system and to be engaged within it. There will have to be a committee structure, which can accommodate the role fulfilled at present by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils on many other matters. It is important to get the appropriate people, in the prime of their careers, who are able to give the time needed for such work, which is of such great importance for the Government.

I also hope that this structure would enable the Minister to get himself out of the somewhat Orwellian position of suppressing advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, while being responsible for open government. His predecessor Lord Joseph published that advice when he was in office, at the request of the Opposition, and it was only discontinued a couple of years ago.

The research councils should act individually in their funding and relationships with Government and outside bodies, seeking support from client groups and making funding recommendations public. There will still be a need for them to meet the Minister and his advisers, and that is the business of the successor to the ABRC. Within that process, it is possible to combine clearly spelling out the research councils' views about their funding needs and the balance of judgment that the Minister, the Chief Secretary and the Government need to make decisions about levels of funding. The science community needs to know that its view is clearly put to and understood by the Government.

For the next decade, the primary measure of success in science policy will be that sustained increase in technological competitiveness, to which the Chancellor referred as the most glaring deficiency today. That can be achieved only by a balanced science and technology policy serving industrial innovation, social and cultural needs and the science base. We hope that the Chancellor will report regularly to the House on progress. He will appreciate that our continuing support and the support of the science community will depend on sufficient progress being made. For the sake of the country and the future of science, we wish the Chancellor every success.

6.20 pm

Sir Geoffrey Pattie (Chertsey and Walton): I declare an interest as non-executive chairman of GEC-Marconi, but it is in my capacity as vice-chairman international of the Conservative party that I should like to make some brief remarks in this debate. First, I welcome the creation of the new post and in particular the accession of my right hon. Friend the Minister to his position, to which he brings formidable intellectual power which certainly should ensure that the Government have a better reception in Oxford than the previous Prime Minister received some little time ago.

As Minister of State for industry and information some time ago, I can testify to the importance of co-ordinating the Government's involvement in science and technology. In my ministerial capacity I had the privilege and opportunity of working with two of Professor Stewart's distinguished predecessors as chief scientific adviser, Sir Robin Nicholson and Sir John Fairclough. Both gave extremely good public service. I was interested to hear my right hon. Friend's news of the progress of the Link scheme and Eureka programme, both of which commenced during my tenure of office at the Department of Trade and Industry.

I should like briefly to turn the attention of the House away from the United Kingdom, surprising though that may be. It is part of the work of the Government to take an interest in science and technology generally, bearing in mind the thesis that science, if it is anything, is universal. Therefore, we have to take note of the needs of other countries. I should like to make some comments about the countries of the former Soviet Union and of central and easten Europe.

There is a serious situation relating to the academies of science in the former Soviet Union. I am indebted to the Royal Society for providing me with an appraisal dated January this year, on which I shall draw extensively. It lists eight problems in the former Soviet Union experienced by the scientific academies.

First, the old Stalinist model of massive and wasteful use of manpower still exists, with a bureaucracy to match and autocratic rule by directors of institutes. Secondly, no republic can continue funding to previous levels, given that economic crisis measures must take priority. Thirdly, the bleak outlook for basic researchers on state salaries forces many to seek alternative outlets in other sectors at home or opportunities to employ their talents overseas. It is estimated that 20 per cent. of top level researchers have accepted contracts to work in foreign institutions. Fourthly, the academies do not have hard currency resources available to them to alleviate temporary shortages of consumables, to subscribe to western scientific journals, to purchase necessary equipment or to fly to foreign destinations. Fifthly, only a few republics publish information of the kind that the west takes for granted, such as lists of institutes, directors, and organigrams, all of which are necessary to take sound decisions on closer co-operation. Knowledge of western science is often scanty or incomplete.

A legal framework for scientific activity in areas such as patent protection is needed to give a proper basis for collaboration. The existing Russian or, more correctly, Soviet law on inventions and discoveries puts the interest of the state before that of individual scientists. The current economic crisis, together with social unrest and potential political instability, may supervene in any attempt to reorganise science. That is all against a background of political and economic disintegration which in many republics has led to a breakdown of law and order.

[Sir Geoffrey Pattie]

The Royal Society is working extremely hard to do what it can to address many of those problems. Its report describes the brainpower of scientists and engineers as one of the most valuable assets of the former constituent republics and a resource which will be vitally needed in their future development. Among basic factors which need to be addressed in Russia and the Ukraine in particular are the need to identify the best science, the need to manage the task carefully and closely, and the need to integrate Russian science with that of the western world.

I have spoken about the former Soviet Union but, as the House will accept, the parlous condition of science obtains throughout all the former communist countries in central and eastern Europe to a greater or lesser degree. I therefore commend to my right hon. Friend the responsibility of his new Department to take account of the needs of science in the various aid programmes being developed and generated in relation to those countries.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the right hon. Gentleman also commend the efforts of Scottish Nuclear to twin with a nuclear power station outside Smolensk and to send great help to the vulnerable Bulgarian power station of Kozloduy?

Sir Geoffrey Pattie: Indeed I will. That is an example of the precise sort of co-operation that both sides of the House would welcome.

Finally, on a separate but related matter, there is a real need for scholarships for first degree courses to be provided to students from the countries to which I have referred. I am thinking of students who already have the qualifications to cope with places at British universities but who, not surprisingly, have no funds to pay for such courses.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: Does my right hon. Friend recall that last year we had a delegation of Russian scientists, that other delegations are coming and that they are asking about bursaries and suggesting exchange visits with, for example, Kazakhstan where the space operation is carried out?

Sir Geoffrey Pattie: I should make it clear that, important and essential though doctoral visits and exchanges are, I am commenting on first degree courses. We have a responsibility to help young people take first degree courses. I hope that a scheme can be launched soon. It could be funded by industry. Our industry could show a mixture of altruism and self-interest, which is always rather an acceptable cocktail. When industry feels good, it could agree to support some of these people from central and eastern Europe on bursaries and then perhaps employ them afterwards. The Government could support that, but need not fund it.

I make no apology for focusing the attention of the House outside the shores of the United Kingdom. As I said earlier, if science is anything, it is universal and all of us who are interested in this subject should be aware of the problems experienced elsewhere on the continent of Europe.

6.28 pm

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): The right hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) will forgive me if I do not follow the theme of his speech. He is absolutely right, however, to draw the attention of the House to two important points—that science is international and that tremendous reserves of highly skilled scientists exist in the Soviet Union and the other former communist countries. The defence industries of those countries took the scientific cream of the cream, but those scientists are now wasted to the world when they could be given useful productive work within the international scientific community.

I join with the right hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton in welcoming the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to his post, which has particular responsibility for science. I especially liked the Minister's remarks at the end of his speech, when he said that he wanted not only to run a Department but to beat the drum for science. That is desperately needed in the government of the country. When I was a Minister, in the far-off days of the Labour Government, I was Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science. I, too, wanted to beat the drum for science, but I found myself beating my head against a wall. The main interest in science was directed at the funding councils, the research councils and higher academic institutions. I wanted to co-ordinate that interest with the tremendous amount of research taking place in industry and in other Departments of State, especially the Ministry of Defence, but no such co-ordination arose. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will be up against it if he attempts to beat the drum for science and to get it clearly heard within the ranks of the civil service and the House.

I welcome the fact that we are holding a debate on science. I remind the House that it is the first debate on science that we have had in Government time since 1985—seven years ago. I admit that there have been other debates on science, but this is the first debate for which we can thank the Government. I am tempted to wonder whether the Government have been so munificent because of the gaping black hole in the legislative programme created by the population of Denmark.

I am glad that science has been given its own Minister and that it will be given a higher profile. I am delighted that that Minister is the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. I remind him that half of my constituency, Widnes, is within the Duchy. He could kill two birds with one stone early in his new career by visiting some industries in my constituency which have made highly important technological advances and by visiting the only museum for the chemical industry in the world—the Catalyst museum, of which I am proud and honoured to be a founder trustee. The previous ministerial visit to the museum was made by Sir David Trippier, who we were delighted to welcome. I was glad to hear that he had been rightly honoured by the Queen in the honours list. Whatever one's party political views, he was a first-rate Minister.

There is no doubt that science receives a bad press from the media, which often regard it as a bogey man. At the current conference in Rio, most of the criticism is directed towards science and its products. The truth is that only science and technology can save the planet, if we are to continue to live in the way to which we have become accustomed, and, even more importantly, if we are to give

a full and proper life to the 90 per cent. of the world's people who face the prospect of a life of nothing but famine, starvation, disease and grinding poverty. Only science and technology can render assistance not just to this country, but to the world. Such is the importance of the subject. There must be greater public awareness—in the House, in the media, and especially in our schools—of the importance of science to the world. It is not the bad boy, but the good boy. Until comparatively recently—certainly when I was at school—it was axiomatic that science and progress were good things. Now, the tendency is to believe the opposite.

I will give an example of the way in which private industry can help to solve problems posed by the warming of the atmosphere, chlorofluorocarbons and their effect on the ozone layer. In my constituency, ICI has spent £250 million on research to find a substitute for CFCs, and it has succeeded—the first company in the world to do so. It developed a product called KLEA 134a, which does everything that CFCs do but, because it does not contain chlorine, it is ozone friendly and does not deplete the ozone layer. Since then, ICI has been investigating a product called KLEA 32 and much more money is being spent on it. The pilot plant for that new product will open in my constituency next month. Tremendous progress has been made since the Montreal protocol and industry has shown that it can develop a substitute for CFCs. Admittedly the expenditure was enormous, but it can be done. KLEA 32 has enormous potential for use in refrigeration—the refrigerated transport of food, supermarket refrigeration and air conditioning. The most dangerous use of CFCs was not in aerosols, but when the gases were used in refrigeration. When those machines were scrapped, the gases were released into the atmosphere. That is an example of the way in which industry is co-operating.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) that our chemical industry has a particularly good record of research and development, in which it invests 6 per cent. of its turnover —a high proportion compared with that invested by the rest of industry. It is a good example to other industries. A similar industry, which we do not praise sufficiently in the House, is the pharmaceutical industry. Is the House aware—very few people are—that four of the 10 top-selling medicines in the world are the discoveries of British companies, including the world's best-selling medicine? Britain produces more than a quarter of the world's top 50 best-selling medicines. That is on a par with those produced in the United States and the rest of Europe combined, and twice the figure for Japan. The pharmaceutical industry's exports earn more than £2 billion a year for the United Kingdom and we are the world's third largest exporter of medicines after Germany and the United States.

The pharmaceutical industry is worried—it has confessed its worries to hon. Members on both sides of the House many times—about the way in which the Government have hitherto acted upon short-term financial considerations, rather than on the long-term needs of our scientific base. I hope that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will seek to correct the Government's attitude, which seriously threatens the environment in which the pharmaceutical industry has thrived until now to the benefit of our country.

The industry is worried for three reasons—the inadequate support for science education in schools, the continuing lack of proper support for the academic infrastructure and the difficulties in collaboration between industry and academia. When one of the best industries in this country, which exports so much and has been almost recession-proof, is expressing such concerns, the Government must sit up and take notice.

Education goes to the root of the problem. I listened to what my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said about science teachers. Let us not kid ourselves about what is happening in primary and secondary schools and sometimes also in sixth-form colleges.

Because of the shortage of scientists, one finds anyone with any sort of scientific base teaching a scientific subject. That often means that the teacher is only a couple of pages ahead of the brightest pupil in the class. That is not fair on the teacher or the pupil. A graduate in biology teaching physics in a school will not communicate the degree of enthusiasm to the pupils as he would if he were teaching biology because, by definition, biology is his chosen subject. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow was right to draw attention to that because it happens so often in our schools.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Having been a science teacher in schools for many years, I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's remarks. Does he agree that we must continue as far as possible to encourage the teaching of single science as well as combined science so as to maintain standards?

Mr. Oakes: I am certain that we should.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: Figures have been put to me suggesting that sixth form pupils—the older teenagers—are showing less interest in maths and science and that the numbers taking those subjects have been falling. That is very bad news indeed.

Mr. Oakes: I think that the hon. Gentleman is right. I must decline, if I am asked, to give way further, bearing in mind Madam Speaker's comments about the number of hon. Members who wish to speak in the debate. I agree with the need to teach single subjects. We must do that with enthusiasm.

How do we get out of the present situation? One difficulty is that we in this country have a poor record in mathematics. It is imperative that we have proper teaching of maths from the primary, let alone the secondary, school level, because one cannot have an innumerate scientist. Whatever his or her discipline—from astronomy to zoology, throughout the alphabet—every scientist must be numerate. Nobody can qualify in science without having numeracy.

I am indebted to the Royal Society of Chemistry for providing me with figures which go to the root of the problem—let us not have an airy-fairy academic discussion—which is pay. I knew that the situation was bad, but I did not realise that it was as bad as the society tells me. The first figures apply to chemistry teachers, though I am sure that the same is true for mathematics and physics teachers and others who could otherwise get jobs in industry.

The average chemistry school teacher aged 39, at the peak of his career, earns about £20,000 per annum. The

[Mr. Oakes]

median grade salary for all members of the society aged 39 is more than £24,000. Those in the upper quartile in industry are earning £29,400—half as much again as a teacher.

The situation becomes worse as we look into it more. It is not a case of it being bad at the start and getting better. By the age of 59, the average wage for the chemistry teacher has hardly improved at all. It is about £23,000. The median figure for all members of the society—chemists working in industry and throughout the rest of the profession—is £30,000 per annum, and for the upper quartile it is £39,000.

Those are the stark facts that the Chancellor must face when talking about the recruitment of scientists into schools. Let us also not forget those valuable people who want to move from industry into teaching. They may have a desire to teach, but they must take a hell of a drop in salary to indulge that desire, for it involves losing half the money that they have been used to earning, and a lifestyle to match.

I am not suggesting that scientists outside education —for example, in Government research institutions—are well paid in this country. We have the ludicrous situation now that at Culham, British research scientists and technicians working on the most important development the world has ever known—fusion, how to get energy that would solve all our present problems, as we worry about pollution from hydro-carbons and so on—are going on strike to be paid the same rate as their German, Swiss and French colleagues doing the same job alongside them.

That is typical of the way in which we regard science and of the double standards which exist in Britain. I hope that the Chancellor will look into those problems and take action to resolve them. *[Interruption.]* I accept that a similar state of affairs existed at the time of the last Labour Government, but it has become far worse. It was wrong then, just as it is wrong now. I am fighting for science. I am not fighting party political battles here, and I remind Conservative Members that the election campaign is over.

I was delighted at what the Minister said about beating the drum for science. One way he can do that is to get more scientists and engineers in influential positions on boards, rather than having accountants running companies. Let us have more scientists, rather than accountants, in those jobs.

The media must recognise the achievements of science and stop knocking them. They must try to understand them and not put out in television programmes the sort of pseudo-science that does not exist in reality. We are being fed that at present and it makes the discussion in Rio meaningless, not just to the ordinary citizen but to me and to hon. Members generally.

We live at a time when we get an honours list almost weekly; we had one last week and we shall get another tomorrow. Can scientists be given more recognition, with fewer honours being given to the stereotyped civil servant or Member of Parliament? Let us give more honours to scientists, who have benefited the world and medical science far more than many of those who at present receive honours ever dreamt of doing. Indeed, let us consider a separate order for scientists, with the Queen giving them separate recognition of the value of their achievements to the nation and the world.

We do not have an academy such as the French Academy or the Soviet Academy of Scientists. We have the Royal Society, but that tends to be academic-based. We need the sort of recognition that other countries show to the greatest and most eminent of their citizens who happen to be scientists. By such an uncostly means, the Chancellor of the Duchy might examine possible ways to advance science in Britain.

6.47 pm

Mr. Peter Brooke (City of London and Westminster, South): The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes), probably unconsciously, made me feel at home by saying that this was our first debate on science since 1985, because that was the last time that I had any involvement in the subject.

In other respects, I cannot feel wholly at home. My brother, when a silk, was approached by the Treasury Solicitor to serve as counsel to the Sizewell inquiry. He explained in reply to the invitation that there was a generation in Britain who had never had a lesson in science in their lives, and that he was a member of it. I am his elder brother, and must plead guilty to the same charge. Any remarks that I make in the debate will thus be more parliamentary than scientific.

It was said of Robert Boyle that he was the father of chemistry and the brother of the Earl of Cork. My remarks, owing more to Cork than to chemistry, will follow the tradition of the Greek chorus, familiar to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. They will not be profound, but I hope that they will be apposite to the present moment in our play, and I avoid any temptation to categorise the latter as a tragedy.

I welcome my right hon. Friends in government—including my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science—as those responsible for such matters, and I join in the welcome that has been given to the procedural steps that have been taken.

My brevity will have three parts. The first is to express sympathy to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster for the scale and breadth of science and its demands compared with the resources available to any late 20th-century Government. It is commonplace that no European country can keep up evenly across the face of science, yet there is also the haunting knowledge that the unfashionable subject of today may be the essential subject tomorrow, and that neglect in this debate may mortgage the next. One thinks of the years before biotechnology, and of the relative state of virology here on the eve of AIDS. No doubt others in the House more learned than I could produce more striking examples. The Chancellor of the Duchy faces a dilemma for which he deserves our sympathy. We shall watch to see how its resolution evolves.

The second part of my brevity relates to the Government's relative allocation of resources to those categories of research beloved of anatomisers—basic, strategic and applied. Of course, I recognise that some of those distinctions may be more apparent than real. During the Administrations of Mrs. Thatcher, there was a perception that if there was a spectrum there was a greater emphasis on the applied than on the basic end, on the ground that by that route we were more likely to see a more immediate return on our investment.

However, the spectrum is also a continuum, and in the fulness of time, the more immediate return diminishes unless the longer-term return is also primed. If, at least in the early years of the Thatcher Administrations, the emphasis was prompted by misgivings about the British ability to capitalise economically on scientific research, we now have to bend our minds collectively to how to cure our tradition—to which the Chancellor of the Duchy referred—of being spectacular inventors yet generally incompetent exploiters.

According to evidence about the pattern of our share of world trade now emerging from a team of economists in Scotland, we now derive a larger share than we did a decade ago from the sale of sophisticated products to sophisticated markets. That suggests that we have begun to rectify the imbalance between invention and exploitation.

However, there is still plenty of anecdotal evidence. I learned of a vivid case at the university of Dundee, in the company of the present chief scientific adviser to the Cabinet, in his previous Dundonian incarnation, which showed that other countries are better than we are at monitoring, culling, and exploiting the new news of our own scientific breakthroughs, let alone the breakthroughs in other countries.

Because our general comparative failure in that area is a century old, and apparently endemic, I wish to express hope about a particular matter. I have been less apocalyptically concerned than have some others that accountants may have had a disproportionate role in British general management, in comparison with, for instance, engineers. But we have had a glaring management lacuna in that developmental thread which stretches from research through development to product and market planning, to costing and design, to pilot and mass production and marketing. That concerns the individual manager at the heart and fulcrum of that process, who needs to control, and thus necessarily to understand, the whole skein—a role which demands a generalist, but one with a multidisciplinary background.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The right hon. Gentleman was, in my opinion, an effective and certainly a courteous and helpful Minister. Taking up the Dundee example, concerning Professor Phil Cohen and the distinguished department of biochemistry there, is not part of the trouble the fact that we do not have, as part of our system of patent law in this country, intellectual property rights, regulations and laws, such as exist in some other countries? Are we not seriously disadvantaged—the most dramatic example of that being the story of Cesar Milstein and the monoclonal antibodies?

Mr. Brooke: I have had exchanges with the hon. Gentleman on such subjects before, and what he says is well worth my right hon. Friend's consideration; it is one of the issues that enters into the question, but I am not sure whether in this instance it is the central issue.

Returning to the idea of the central manager, I do not regard the master of business administration qualification as an automatic realisation of that need. However, many MBAs with backgrounds in different undergraduate disciplines who enter on a business school postgraduate degree will contribute to filling that gap. It is gratifying that their numbers in this country are accelerating so rapidly. In the context of earlier speeches, I note how auspicious it is that in Brussels the EUREKA programme is located in the rue Archimede.

My third point, as befits a Greek chorus, has a touch of threnody about it, and is typically apposite to the Earth summit. I refer to the tendency of lobbyists in general and the media in particular to press the Government, in ways such as those referred to by the right hon. Member for Halton, to take scientific decisions in the face of real or imagined ills—whether those are, for example, environmental or medical—before the scientific community can pronounce authoritavely with any certainty on the diagnosis of and prescription for those ills.

I realise that it was probably ever thus and that the boot is not on a single foot—the scientific community may always want more time. However, one of the potential benefits of the greater scientific emphasis both in government and in the House may be a growing appreciation in the country that many such matters are very complex, and that hurrying a decision may not be in our overall best interests. Of course, the best is sometimes the enemy of the good, but the pressurised can be the enemy of the good also.

As has been said, our debate is accompanied by a motion on the Order Paper concerning the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster implied, such a reference must necessarily prompt grateful memories of our erstwhile hon. Friend, Sir Ian Lloyd, who did so much to bring that about. The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology was perhaps a King Charles's head to Sir Ian, but there are King Charles's heads and King Charles's heads, and Sir Ian's was a wholly beneficial one.

I finish with a different institutional question. The European Commission has published a proposal for a Council decision establishing a multiannual programme for the development of Community statistics on research, development and innovation. Knowing the Government's earlier aversion to extending the Community's economic and business statistical barrage, I would be genuinely and open-mindedly interested in what the Government's response is or will be to that proposal. I was not clear whether what my right hon. Friend said about the EC included our reaction to it.

6.57 pm

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): Like many other Members, I begin by congratulating the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) on his appointment as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. I also very much welcome the establishment of the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology.

Hon. Members may not be aware that, although I live close to my constituency of Bath, I do not live in it but in Bristol, so the Chancellor of the Duchy has the dubious privilege of representing me in the House. I shall therefore take particular notice of his speeches here. On the subject of science, I was encouraged by the speech with which he opened the debate.

I should also point out that I am a member of the Institute of Physics, a former science teacher—I stress the word "science", in view of the dialogue that took place earlier about separate sciences—and a former trainer of science teachers. However, I confess that I have been much humbled by what I have heard so far today, especially by

[Mr. Don Foster]

the knowledge that both the Chancellor of the Duchy and the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) have managed to read to the end of, and to understand, Stephen Hawking's book. That is something that I do not claim to be able to do.

Dr. Moonie: Nobody said that they understood it.

Mr. Foster: That is right; I retract my remark—but at least both admitted that they had got to the end of the book. I would far prefer to have debated with them the way in which Tycho Brahe lost his nose or the activities of James Prescott Joule on his honeymoon—both make interesting stories.

I was interested in the speech of the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray). It was constructive and I learnt much from it. In my first outing in a science debate —I fear that if I am to believe what I hear about the number of such debates held in the Chamber, it may be some time before I participate in another one—I do not intend to be as discursive as the hon. Member for Motherwell, South.

The Liberal Democrats have welcomed the way in which science is to be given a higher profile in the House. I am also conscious of the low status of science and technology, and engineering in this country and—as evidenced by today's turnout—the House. I have looked at the records and understand that when what was probably the most important engineering report—the Finniston report—was debated in the Chamber in 1980, there was an attendance of a maximum of 10 Members. It took a further eight years before there was another discussion of engineering in the House. We can be pleased at today's attendance rate which, by my count, is more than three times that for the debate on the Finniston report. That is not to imply that there have not been other science debates in the Chamber.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) has gone to great pains to stress that he initiated a debate, on a Supply day, on the exciting topic of interactive fibre-optic telecommunication networks reaching into every household in Britain. I am sure that that debate fascinated the few hon. Members present for it. I understand that during the debate he explained the vital importance of gallium arsenide and other mysteries. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) is beside me, as I understand that he knows about gallium arsenide. If hon. Members wish to know more, they should ask him after the debate.

Science and technology in this country is in a comparatively parlous state and we are not best placed to move forward to meet the challenges of the next century. If we listen to the debate currently raging in Rio, we must accept that it is on the scientists, technologists and engineers that the future of this country and, indeed, the world will depend. It was all very well for the Chancellor of the Duchy to say that, in looking at the way forward, we should take stock of our achievements. It is also important to take stock of the difficulties that we have faced and try to analyse the reasons for them.

The evidence shows that our universities face problems after a decade of underfunding. More teachers of science and maths are leaving the teaching profession than joining it. Of the engineers that qualify, only 50 per cent. join engineering-related professions and others move on to seek better pay, better opportunities, increased responsibility, wider futures and increased recognition and respect.

One of our biggest failings has been our failure to invest in innovation. As the Chancellor of the Duchy admitted, to reverse that trend, science, industry, the education service and the Government must all play a part. Today's speech by the Chancellor of the Duchy may mark a turning point, but for too many years the Government have shown an inadequate commitment to supporting and encouraging science and engineering. The consequences of that failure for this country are related to its economic position.

Fewer and fewer patents are being awarded to people in this country, while those in our competitor nations are receiving more and more patents. Despite what has been said about the increased number of references to scientific papers produced in this country, there is growing evidence that our British research publications are having less of an impact in the world. We are faced with a stark choice and one which I think the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster was beginning to pick up in his speech.

We must consider investment in research and development; we must reflect on the past and some of the problems that we have faced. There is a range of statistics giving the expenditure on various types of research. Someone else could give another set of figures to contradict some of my comments. One of our biggest problems is that we simply do not have an adequate database from which to progress. There is evidence in some of the figures to show that our civil research and development expenditure, when compared to that of other European countries, Japan and the United States, has fallen. We have slipped down the league table of expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product, from about seventh to about 11th place. There are problems relating to the various mechanisms by which money is raised for research and development in higher education. Those methods are frequently changed. The evidence suggests, that since 1979, expenditure as a percentage of GDP has fallen from about 0·35 per cent. to about 0·32 per cent.

The Chancellor of the Duchy said, as has the Prime Minister, that the amount of money intended for expenditure on research and development in our higher education institutions is increasing, and various figures have been given. However, the problem is that we must consider those increased figures in the light of various inflation factors. I think that we would all accept that inflation in relation to aspects of research and development rises more rapidly than inflation in other spheres. Certainly, the Save British Science Society argues that the increases in cash terms that have been mentioned will mean a reduction in buying power for scientific research in future.

I said that it was possible to obtain a set of figures on the increased or reduced investment in research and development in both the public and private sector, but perhaps it is more important to consider the concerns expressed by a wide range of organisations. The Chancellor of the Duchy has already met representatives of the Save British Science Society, and has agreed to have future meetings with them. I have also received submissions—as I am sure he has—from representatives in higher education, including those from the Committee of

Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics. All the submissions showed a deep concern about the future of scientific and technological research in this country.

There is evidence of people involved in the profession wanting to move abroad and of low morale within our institutions, with recent graduates starting to think that research is not an attractive career. Research contracts are frequently terminated due to shortage of funds and many promising ideas and projects either remain unfinished or the ideas behind them are sold overseas.

There are problems in obtaining backing for any blue-sky research. One of my constituents has conducted lengthy blue-sky research and translated his findings into a piece of educational technology that may well revolutionise language teaching in this country. Unfortunately, he is unable to get the resources to support him and will now almost certainly take his idea overseas.

Mr. Knapman: Can the hon. Gentleman give examples of projects that have terminated because of a lack of research council finance?

Mr. Foster: People in the faculty of engineering in the university in the Chancellor of the Duchy's constituency have problems about the continuity of research funds. I do not claim to be an expert, but I understand that one of the problems is that research council funding cannot be continued for more than a year. There is also a problem about carrying forward deficits and surpluses. I hope that the Chancellor of the Duchy will address that.

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): The nuclear structure facility was one good project for which funds ceased. Perhaps that answers the question by the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman).

Mr. Foster: I am grateful for that example.

The Chancellor of the Duchy spoke about initiatives that he proposes. I am glad that he is to implement a commitment in the Conservative manifesto about the intermediate centres. That was dealt with in the Liberal Democrat manifesto in slightly different language. We call them regional technology transfer centres, but the principle is the same. I hope that he will discuss the possibility of greater autonomy for the research councils. He said that he will speak to industry with a view to finding other ways of developing greater links between the academic world and industry. I hope that he will expand the SMART scheme and consider the reintroduction of the support for innovation scheme. I know that the right hon. Gentleman has already had many representations about such ideas.

In view of my interest and background in science teaching, I was interested to hear the Chancellor of the Duchy say that he would work with his colleagues in the Cabinet. He mentioned some of them and spoke in particular about the Secretary of State for Education. I hope that he will work closely with the Secretary of State to ameliorate some of the growing problems in science and technology education. As the Chancellor of the Duchy knows, the Secretary of State has ordered an urgent review of technology in the national curriculum following the damning reports from Her Majesty's inspectorate and the Engineering Council. In the words of Denis Filer, the director of the Engineering Council, the review is intended, "to put an end to the Mickey Mouse technology that has manifested itself in schools."

It seems that, not before time, Mickey is being sent back to the drawing board.

Many of our newspapers have said that our children are being forced into a Blue Peter, paper and sticky-back plastic approach to technology. Perhaps some of the headlines are a little over the top, but comparisons with competitor countries are worrying. The report of Her Majesty's inspectorate that led the Secretary of State to ask for the review showed that 40 per cent. of technology lessons in secondary schools and more than a third in primary schools were less than satisfactory. The report also condemned too little initial and in-service training. One reason for that is funding.

The constituency of the Chancellor of the Duchy is within the area of Avon education authority. Because of the fear of poll-tax capping, there have been significant reductions in expenditure. The cuts have led to the closure of technology centres, thus removing some of the support for people who are trying to develop technology in schools throughout the county. Nationally, there has been a cut in the number of science advisers and science centres. There is evidence in the report to show that about 50 per cent. of information technology equipment in our schools has been bought by parents. Tesco has got in on the act because people can now get school computers using vouchers obtained with purchases in Tesco stores. The Government squeeze on expenditure on education is, in part, responsible for the concern about technological education.

HMI regularly reports on the teaching of science. In its most recent report on science key stages 1, 2 and 3, the inspectorate said that there had been improvements in science education, but that it was still concerned about some areas. It said that teachers' lack of scientific knowledge at key stage 2 had restricted children's progress. On key stage 3, HMI said that pupils were less good at planning investigations and interpreting evidence, and it spoke about the burden of the current assessment procedure. The report states:

"Assessment recording and reporting have continued to create heavy workloads for teachers and to cause them anxiety . . . The provision of resources for science showed improvement from last year but shortages continued to restrict the quality of work in a significant minority of schools."

It added:

"The proportion of secondary schools with too little specialist accommodation was higher than last year and many primary school classes work in less than ideal conditions for science."

Those problems in our schools do not bode well for the future of science and technology in our society. I hope that, when the Chancellor of the Duchy speaks to the Secretary of State for Education, he will mention the need for increased investment in science and technology education and in education generally.

The Government are mainly responsible for the decline in science and technology and have a major responsibility for reversing the trend. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman's new post and his encouraging speech signal a willingness to take the necessary action. I wish him well.

7.17 pm

Sir Gerard Vaughan (Reading, East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) on his thoughtful and constructive speech, most of which I agreed with. It is early days for the Chancellor of the Duchy and his able colleague the Parliamentary Secretary,

[Sir Gerard Vaughan]

Office of Public Service and Science. It is not surprising that high expectations have been raised in the scientific and technological community. I am worried that my right hon. Friend will find it difficult to sustain those expectations because many frustrations have developed over the years. At long last we have what our competitors in Germany, France and of course Japan have benefited from and used for many years—a Minister of science at the centre of government.

We have heard much about low morale in the scientific community and about the poor image of scientists in the eyes of many people. In an article in *The Daily Telegraph* today, my right hon. Friend referred to the very real fears and anxieties that the public have about science. I have been sensitive to people'ss anxieties about biotechnology, genetic engineering and foetal experiments—all matters that we have debated. On a previous occasion, I spoke about how many nuclear scientists were unaware of the long-term implications of what they were doing, until the power of decision was taken out of their hands. Many matters worry people in the community, not least those being discussed in Rio. I hope that my right hon. Friend will see it as within his wide remit and responsibilities to keep a watch on the ethics, the purposes and the meaningfulness of much of the scientific work research that is carried out. Perhaps we need a citizens charter against scientists.

A whole range of matters cause concern. I shall touch on three. The first is the need for a Select Committee. It is good for a Department and for the House to have a parliamentary procedure for examining what the Department is doing, and only a Select Committee can examine it in detail and fully. I am gratified that the early-day motion tabled by the hon. Member for Motherwell, South and me will, by tomorrow morning, have been signed by 182 right hon. and hon. Members. More signatures come in every day. We cannot discuss science policy adequately, in this Chamber or in the Select Committee, however, unless we have a clear science policy to discuss. Here, too, is one of the failures of Government in recent years. I know that my right hon. Friends will be looking at this and coming back to us with what I hope will be a much more coherent science policy than we have so far had.

The second thing that bothers me is the relationship between original science and industry. We need to remind ourselves over and over again that a thriving science research base means innovative industrial development, which in turn leads to increased prosperity both nationally and individually. Will the Chancellor of the Duchy take up a point first suggested by Sir John Fairclough, a previous chief scientific adviser, that we look at the Fraunhofer Institute in Germany, which integrates scientific research and the industrial parts of the German economy? I was pleased that the last Parliament saw the successsful privatisation of the British Technology Group, and I hope that that, in a small way, will help in this sector.

Thirdly, and lastly, I am deeply concerned about the structure within the Department. The Advisory Council on Science and Technology needs to be looked at, and I am glad that the Prime Minister is to chair this, but the Advisory Board for the Research Councils also needs to be examined. I have been concerned about the relationship between the ABRC and the Universities Funding Council. I understand that they rarely talk to each other. Now, there will be one Minister for the research councils and another for higher education. I should like to know, because this is a matter of urgency, how the two Ministers will relate to each other and whether there will be a link to bring together the priorities of the two Departments.

When the Select Committee on Education and Science tried to see who allocated priorities for the funding of research, we found that we had to deal with five different Government Departments, with the Treasury sitting over them. I hope that, with his new appointment, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy will be able to exercise real leadership, and avoid that quagmire of different committees and responsibilities.

7.24 pm

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): We must welcome the fact that the debate is being held and that science has been given a much higher profile within Government. I join the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) in welcoming the fact that, on the Order Paper today, we have support for the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, in which I declare a small, non-financial interest as a member of the board. I hope that this will increase the profile of science in the House and strengthen the case for the Select Committee.

I am much less sanguine, however, about the outcome of the project of the Chancellor of the Duchy's Department, first because, within that Department, the affairs of the citizens charter are much more substantial, in numbers and resources, and are likely to be more politically pressing than his responsibility for science. Secondly, the Advisory Council on Science and Technology has been mentioned, but the Chancellor of the Duchy did not refer to the work that it has done recently, and I find that alarming. He did not refer to the report on the environment which came out only last month. He did not refer to its existing, and very exciting, work programme. I was therefore worried when, at the end of his speech, he said that he would be issuing a White Paper at the beginning of next year on work programmes and institutional structures. Much of the work programme and its objectives are already present in the existing work of ACOST, which has been absorbed into his Department.

I am anxious about another matter. What is to be the relationship between the Office of Science and Technology and the Department of Trade and Industry? In his speech to *The Sunday Times* development conference a little over a week ago, the soi disant President of the Board of Trade said that the responsibilities of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Office of Science and Technology would be limited to the co-ordination of public resources in science. The inference was that responsibility for the interface between industry and science, which has widely occupied so many in this debate, would not form part of the responsibilities of the Office of Science and Technology. Such Balkanisation within Government would give rise to great concern. Much of the Chancellor's speech was directed at a problem that the President of the Board of Trade regards as being his responsibility and that of his Department. That matter must be resolved quickly.

We cannot be sanguine about the position of British science. It is no good looking back at past triumphs and successes—we must look forward. The Department of Trade and Industry, in a publication which came out a little over a fortnight ago, revealed some alarming facts. One third of all the patents taken out in the world in 1991 were taken out by Japan, and 25 per cent. of the human resources available in the world in scientific research are Japanese.

My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) rightly compared this country with France and Germany, but Japanese manpower, human resources, in scientific research exceeds the human resources of France, Germany, Italy and this country combined, and if we are not careful we shall be economically and intellectually overwhelmed by those resources. It is perfectly understandable that the Japanese should roll down to Rio rather than totter down as we have done and say, in effect, "We can underpin the whole show. Give us biodiversity. We will pay for it and make it work for you." They have the intellectual and financial resources to do that—we have not.

I wish briefly to mention three particular topics. The first—the importance of regional affairs in science—has already been mentioned by the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster). In my region in the north we have some important world-class higher education institutions, but we do not have the linkage with science and technology in industry. What worries me is that, of the 170 Government research establishments in England and Wales, 75 are in the south-east and only 10 are in the north of England. When one compares not just the institutions but the numbers, quality, repute and power within their departments and the people who work in those institutions, the disparity is greater still. If the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is responsible for the co-ordination of public resources in science, he will have to ensure a much stronger presence in the regions of the scientific resources which are at present concentrated far too heavily in the south-east.

My second point has already been mentioned in an intervention by the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), and that is the key importance of defence. There was no mention of the Chancellor of the Duchy's relationship with the Ministry of Defence in his speech even though, by a happy coincidence, Sir Peter Levene is on his staff. I should have thought that that was something to which the Chancellor would refer when almost half the Government's spending on science and technology goes into defence. We have some profound and difficult decisions to take about defence. If we cannot have sensible programmes of conversion of defence technological expertise into civil use, we shall face problems. The Defence Research Agency is projecting a 40 per cent. cut in its manpower. Defence technological enterprises, one of the Government's initiatives, has virtually collapsed. We see the industrial impact of cuts in defence spending. It is vital that we make the link between what are now programmes of expenditure purely in defence and things that can service the technological reconstruction of our industry as a whole.

The Royal Society report on science in Russia was mentioned earlier, and another important point needs to be made about that. That report says that a top Russian nuclear physicist can be bought for $60 a month. If we do not attend to the career prospects and livelihoods of such people, heaven only knows what nuclear, chemical and biological warfare proliferation we shall lay in train. I should have thought that the Government would give high priority to that matter.

My last point relates to biology and the environment, in which Britain has traditionally and in recent times led the world. A Government who have treated the Brogdale fruit farm so badly are in no position to claim that as a success for themselves. If the Government cannot respect the Victoria plum, I doubt whether they can do much for the rain forest. Britain leads in those areas, but the recent ACOST report said that the priority now is to convert the long-range long-run programmes of research and intellectual exploration into programmes that will affect the food production and waste management in the short to medium future. I hope that the Government will take that on board.

When we talk about climate change and all the biology and physics that go with that, we are talking about things which provide the key to entirely new industries in food, waste management and health which will be at the centre of the industrial world in the early 21st century. We must maintain our leadership in those areas.

Mr. Dalyell: When the hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) and I were campaigning to save Brogdale, one of the worrying things was how ill-informed the Government were. It was proposed to transplant delicate fruit plants into a frost area where they would almost certainly die.

Mr. Cousins: My hon. Friend makes a good point. A Government who almost literally cannot respect biodiversity in their own back yard cannot have much claim to be the protector of biodiversity across the planet.

I come now to what is at the centre of a great many problems, some of which have already been mentioned. The Government must make their priority a thorough world-wide reform of the intellectual property system. We are entering a patents crisis. The Medical Research Council is already saying that we face the prospect of patent wars—that the intellectual property system and the laws that go with it in this country, across Europe and in north America, are a major obstruction to innovation, particularly in biotechnology. It must be the Government's priority to establish international conventions in those areas which would permit such developments to come on stream early.

One particular point which must be the focus of concern is the fact that in the United States the National Institute of Health has patented part of the human genome. How on earth can we go to Rio and make the claims for biodiversity that we and the United States are making when we are already preparing to patent parts of nature itself? These are not products in any sense of the term, but things which bear no immediate utility and are simply a way of seeking the intellectual capture of future industrial areas. That is disgraceful.

The fact that the Government have encouraged the Medical Research Council to follow the example of the United States National Institute of Health and to prepare to patent our bits of the human genome is an utter disgrace. In theory, the countries of the third world, with their forests heaving with species, could patent on the same basis. That is a matter of enormous concern.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): As the hon. Gentleman describes the situation as an utter disgrace, I should say that the position was made clear in press statements by the Medical Research Council. The line that it is taking in respect of the patents is entirely protective. It has been stimulated by the American action. We are seeking to persuade the Americans, in consort with our European partners, to back away from that position, but meanwhile we are protecting our position in that context.

Mr. Cousins: That is what is said, of course, but the Government have followed down the main road. How can the Government go to Rio and talk about biodiversity and saving the species of the rain forests and wherever else when they have already begun to start patenting parts of the human body and the human biological system? We and the Americans have begun to do that. It is a fatal first step which the Government and the Medical Research Council should not have taken.

We all know about past anxieties resulting from the failure to patent DNA and the echo that that has had, but this is a new situation. The Government should be seeking to achieve an international convention on the way in which we work the intellectual property of the new biological developments which will be at the centre of so many industrial elements in future. We face a second scientific revolution, coming from the biological area, in which we shall not attempt to conquer nature as we did in the past but rather to echo it, adapt it, change it, run with its grain. The implications of that for our way of life and for many of our industries are revolutionary and substantial. I find it disappointing that no trace of that intellectual excitement appeared in the speech by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and that all that we are to expect is a White Paper next January or February which, once again, will drag us back to organisational change within the British scientific establishment.

7.39 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): There is a wide welcome in the House for this debate on science and technology. Such debates are of greater significance than those that we often have on matters concerning economic policy and structure. I agree with other hon. Members who have spoken that this is a debate of great significance and that we have such debates all too infrequently. The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) referred to our debate on engineering some years ago, which I led as it was on a private Member's motion. It was a similar debate in the sense that there was a great deal of agreement across the House on the importance of the debate and on the main points of it.

It is right that we should have this opportunity to highlight the importance of science and technology. I agree with the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) that we should look forward in this debate rather than living on our grand scientific past. As an ex-science teacher, no one knows better than I that we have a great scientific past. However, I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we should not continually look back at that. We should look forward, and I was able to share that sentiment at least with him.

There must be a debate about science itself. Science is the application of rational analysis and thought to problems. Science requires high-level intellectual effort and self-discipline. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) made clear, science is international and unifying. I was pleased that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor referred to the anti-science campaign. We do not want to overstate the strength of that campaign, but I was pleased that it was referred to by several hon. Members.

This is a good moment for those of us who believe strongly in science to say how much we deplore "scientophobes"—those who seem to hate science, such as Brian Appleyard and Fay Weldon. Such people play on the fears of those who lack the moral courage to face the challenges of true science. Those woolly thinkers would leave us stuck with necromancers, the astrologers and the alchemists of the middle ages rather than with the mathematicians, the physicists, the chemists and the engineers of the present. I welcome the way in which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor introduced that thought and I hope that we shall have more opportunity to debate that view and the way in which the media treat science. I do not have time to go into detail on that at present.

I will link science, mathematics and engineering in my speech because this is a debate on science and technology, so we must include engineering in our remarks. The Prime Minister made a pledge when he spoke recently at the national final of the young engineers of Britain competition which was held under the auspices of the Engineering Council. He said that we must change the culture of Britain

"so that the British engineer enjoys the same status as the German engineer."

Other hon. Members have referred to the question of status. The view of the status of engineers is partly a matter of education. It is, therefore, good that recent Government reforms have led to a greater emphasis on good science and technology in our curriculum. I welcome the Government's role in that.

Other hon. Members have referred to recent criticism of technology in schools. I join in welcoming the recent announcement by the Secretary of State for Education that there would be a review of technology courses in schools. That announcement has also been welcomed by the Engineering Council. There is a suggestion, which I support, that the Engineering Council can and should be involved in giving assistance to inspectors in monitoring the new technology courses and seeing how they develop so that they will improve in future.

Mr. Dalyell: After the buffeting that the hon. Gentleman and I suffered at University college, London, where we went as guests of Women in Science, does he agree that more must be done to attract women into science and to give them better conditions?

Mr. Thompson: I recall that vigorous debate and I recall that the hon. Gentleman and I took a similar line on nuclear power which meant that we found ourselves in a minority. It was a very enjoyable occasion. I wholly support the hon. Gentleman's remarks about getting more women involved in engineering and science, which is an important point.

The Government's willingness to adapt policy, as shown in the recent announcement by the Secretary of State for Education, is a sign of strength rather than a sign of weakness.

I highlighted the success of a school in my constituency. Heartsease high school recently won an award in the

design and build competition organised by the Machine Tool Trades Association. Other schools win awards, of course, but I have highlighted this one. A lot of good work in technology goes on in many schools and we must give credit where it is due. I pay tribute to the teachers and everyone involved at that school.

There has been a recent encouraging survey which seems to contradict some of the earlier remarks about what is happening in schools and among young people. Professor Bridges of the school of education at the university of East Anglia has found in a recent survey linked with the Engineering Council that young people are now beginning to develop a better image of engineering. That is very good news. Some of the remarks made in response to the survey included:

"They travel the world and earn lots of money",

"They work with three dimensional computer imaging"

and

"Engineers are like doctors, lawyers and accountants".

We seem to be getting fewer of the comments that people might have expected, such as the comment by one young person who said:

"I didn't expect them to work in an office . . . I thought they worked outside mending things".

The good news is that the survey showed that the image of engineering in schools has undoubtedly improved in recent years, and that may be a tribute to the neighbourhood engineers scheme which is run under the auspices of the Engineering Council with financial support from the Department of Trade and Industry. The scheme is obviously beginning to have a good effect and I hope that that work can continue. I gather that it is intended that every school will have been involved in the neighbourhood engineers scheme by 1995 at the latest. That is the kind of urgency which we need to inject into the proceedings.

I ask my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, who is now on the Treasury Bench—in spite of the remarks towards the end of his speech, I admired and agreed with almost every word of it—that we should have a greater sense of urgency. I get a little nervous when we talk about White Papers in 1993 and about having a long discussion. I agree with hon. Members who have said that the points being put in this debate are matters of high urgency which this country should have thought about and addressed many years ago.

My main message to my right hon. Friend is to stress the urgency of our debate this evening and the need, without making mistakes, to progress with speed and with purpose. I find myself otherwise very much in agreement with what he said.

I welcome my right hon. Friend's appointment to a post in which he will oversee science policy. When I have been to the Institute of Physics and when I hear from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, I continually get messages of welcome for the new appointment. It is marvellous that we have been able to begin the new arrangement of Government Departments with such a positive response from outside. I hope that we can reinforce that in future years.

I now come to the Campaign for Physics. One aspect of the campaign is that attention has been drawn to the economic contribution of physics-based industry. Evidence has been assembled that shows that physics-based industries outperform the manufacturing sector of the United Kingdom economy as a whole, that sales in these industries rose by 116 per cent. between 1980 and 1989, compared with 88 per cent. for the sector as a whole, and that these figures help to explain the growth in the United Kingdom's share of the export market in physics-based products. The 22 per cent. increase in the Government's science budget, in real terms, over the last decade has paid dividends. It is good that there has been a significant growth in Government funding, in research funded by industry and in research funded by other bodies and charities.

A clear lead from the Government will set the policy objectives for the rest of this Parliament and beyond. It is vital that such a lead should be given urgently.

7.50 pm

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): It is a pleasure to speak in a debate in which all hon. Members have welcomed the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to his new office. He will play an important role. His constructive spirit will benefit science and technology in this country.

Before I deal with two aspects of science policy in particular, I intend to refer to three points that often plague both its formulation and its application. First, its formulation and application are always difficult, because our scientific knowledge exists, by definition, in the present —at a particular point in time. For example, if we had known about the environmental problems associated with polychlorinated biphenyls, I am certain that Monsanto would not have manufactured them at Newport. I am even more certain that the then Purle waste disposal company would not have been allowed to bury PCB waste in three quarries—at Ty-Llwyd and Brofiskin quarries in Gwent and in the Maendy quarry in Mid Glamorgan.

Secondly, if no effort is made to look for evidence, we shall find none. It is easy to follow the adage: seek not and ye shall find not. For example, if the Government funded a large research project, on a much larger scale than that carried out by Dr. David Kay of University college, Lampeter, into the relationship between human health and bathing in grossly polluted sea water, it is possible that the conventional wisdom would have to be radically altered. Additions may have to be made to the conjunctivitis and travellers' diarrhoea, identified in the tenth report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution, that result from bathing in such waters. What is even more important, our water bills may have to rise even further as a consequence of such an investigation.

It would be far better, therefore, to respond in the way that the Department of the Environment responded to the European Community's bathing waters directive of 1976 —to buy time and use an artful dodge, to define a bathing beach in such a way that, for example, for many years after 1976 Wales did not possess such an item. By definition, therefore, the directive did not apply to Wales. Environmental organisations were able to claim that every beach in Wales was filthy. The Welsh Office and the Department of the Environment could equally claim that every beach in Wales was clean. That problem frequently arises when Departments bend the rules and use terminology and interpretation to their own advantage.

Thirdly, there is the danger of basing one's views on political advantage, because it is thought that that is more important than the evidence. I was taken in by that. For many years I took part in the campaign that attempted to prevent fluoride being added to drinking water. How foolish I felt when I read the evidence. I could not find a

[Mr. Gareth Wardell]

single scientific study published anywhere in the world that demonstrated that fluoride had harmful effects if added to drinking water at the permitted level. The literature abounds with examples of its benefits.

I am pleased that Professor Lennon, one of the leading professors of preventive dentistry in Britain, was able to confirm in a letter that he wrote to me on 4 February 1992 that fluoridation has been recognised for over 40 years as the single most effective public health measure that is available to reduce dental caries.

I received today a letter from the Under-Secretary of State for Wales in which he said:

"The Government is also very much aware of the particular sensitivities surrounding the issue of fluoridation."

The Government ought to go further and accept that scientific evidence shows unanimously that fluoridation is of enormous benefit in reducing dental caries. Instead of trying to claw back 7 per cent. of the money that dentists received last year for the work that they carried out, which has benefited the people of this country, it would be far better if the Government carried out a fluoridation programme that prevented dental caries. The services of dental surgeons would then be needed far less than they are now.

The first of my two main points is that the Government need actively to encourage in-service courses for Members of Parliament. They are essential if we are to keep abreast of the rapid changes in science. Why should we be exempted from in-service training courses? Secondly, the British Government should again become a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

On my first point, I shall confine my remarks to the new biotechnology as it affects human genes. Incredible opportunities for good are opening up with the new biotechnology, but they bring two problems in their wake. Diagnostic advances, which will increase the number of diseases that are capable of early detection, pose massive problems as to the legal protection that is necessary to ensure that such information is not used to discriminate against individuals in their place of work or in obtaining insurance cover. There is also the huge personal problem of coping with such information. Dr. Steve Jones, reader in genetics at University college, London, in his excellent Reith lectures last year, asked:

"Do we really want to know that we may die of a disease about which we can do nothing?"

There is, however, a second issue. If gene replacement therapy takes place in the somatic cells, this seems to be an admirable way forward for the treatment of human diseases. The problem becomes acute only when one looks for the extension of gene therapy to the reproductive cells, the so-called germline cells. Would it not be marvellous to be able to eliminate, for example, cystic fibrosis in future generations? Would that not, however, carry with it the risk of moving away from the eradication of inherited disease to the genetic enhancement of beauty, athletic prowess, intelligence or any other attribute deemed to be worthy of attention at any particular time? I accept that germline therapy is unlikely to be possible in humans for the foreseeable future, for purely technical reasons. However, it is a matter too vital to be largely ignored by Members of Parliament. We have a leading part to play in the debate.

If there is a glaring gap in this House, it is the absence of trained scientists to grace our Benches. I am pleased to note that the attendance this evening fills that gap to a larger degree than hitherto. We have a number of organisations that do their best to assist us, in addition to the superhuman efforts of our excellent Library staff. There is the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee, the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, the Foundation for Science and Technology, the Royal Society, the British Association for the Advancement of Science and the Royal Society of Chemistry—all of which are very helpful.

The Centre for Science and Technology publishes excellent studies on our relative competitive strength in science and technology. The Industry and Parliamentary Trust has begun its first postgraduate programme in a specialist area of science—biotechnology. As a trustee and fellow of the IPT, I am grateful to ICI for the honour for being the first person to take part in ICI's programme in biotechnology.

The Minister could make a tremendous contribution to the efficacy of the formulation of Government policy, and my plea to him is to draw together the different organisations, not only to enable Members of Parliament to be fully informed of the radical changes in areas such as biotechnology, but to enable them to have hands-on experience in the laboratory and find out what scientists are doing at the sharp end. That would ensure that the ethical issues and the legal framework are debated meaningfully in the House.

My second point is the need for Britain to renew its membership of UNESCO. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for his untiring efforts to that end. His most recent plea came in the *New Scientist* on 30 May. I have had correspondence with a number of people, especially a constituent of mine, Professor Ager. He is emeritus professor of geology at University college, Swansea, and formerly an eminent member of one of UNESCO's committees—the international geological correlation programme.

The approved projects of that programme were all useful and desirable, ranging from the academic—such as the correlation of pre-Cambrian rocks between west Africa and Brazil—to the purely economic, such as the tin and tungsten resources of south-east Asia. They included such matters as the mutual collaboration of neighbouring countries on the development of particular resources, such as the vital phosphorates and the synthesis of data on particular parts of the geological record. An interesting proposal was to use satellites to monitor rising heat in the crust under the Andes to give advance warning of volcanic eruptions.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate my two main points. The first is the desperate need for Members of Parliament to play a far greater role in the formulation of Government policy on science and technology. Perhaps the Minister, in his new job, could envisage a new educative role for some of his officials. Currently, Members of Parliament are in a weak position in trying to answer some of the questions that the Chancellor of the Duchy posed at the end of his speech. Secondly, we lose a great deal by not being part of UNESCO. We need to rejoin it quickly so that we do not lose any more time in becoming part of that organisation and in contributing to it. We need UNESCO perhaps more than UNESCO needs us.

8.4 pm

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): It is a real pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell), who was right to highlight the generally constructive tone of the debate. It was useful that, in the examples he cited, although I would not necessarily underwrite them in every particular, he showed the wide range of expectation that the appointment of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy and my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) to the Office of Science and Technology has raised in the House. The hon. Gentleman touched on departmental interests that he hopes will be streamed through my right hon. Friend, affecting health, foreign affairs, industry and so on. I will deal directly with that matter when I discuss the question of satellites in a moment.

I join right hon. and hon. Members in welcoming both my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend to their appointments, and I welcome their commitment to consultation. They need to consider the way in which state-funded research operates in universities, Government Departments and research councils. It is my plea that they will not overlook the contribution that can be made from a number of other sources, and I wish to highlight two in particular. The first is professional bodies, and the second is Parliament.

On the first source, I do not want to run through the shopping list but instead will pick up a theme which has already been mentioned tonight, about the role of the engineer as a key figure in the application of science and technology. The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) referred to discussion on Finniston. As, at the time, I was the Minister responsible for considering Finniston, I feel a moral obligation 10 years on to look at the position today. I must say that we are still well short of where I believe we would wish to be in raising the status of engineers and, perhaps even more importantly, in ensuring that engineering plays its full part in directing research and development to practical and measurable success.

We are all familiar with the old criticism—it has come out tonight—that our skills in invention are not sufficiently carried through into application. I agree with what Sir William Barlow, president of the Fellowship of Engineering, said in a timely comment this week—that it was regrettable that the Earth summit in Brazil had no engineering dimension. I note that, writing in *The Daily Telegraph* today, my right hon. Friend referred to environmentalists reinventing guilt. Sir William rightly said that engineers are blamed for environmental problems, but we should recognise that they alone can solve them. I hope that that is a dimension that my hon. Friend the Minister will take on board in the work of his Department.

On the role of Parliament, I add my voice to those who have welcomed the motion on the Order Paper relating to the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology and who have called for a Select Committee on science and technology. If we are to continue the tradition of shadowing Government Departments, it would not be sensible to have an obvious omission for a major Department of State.

I also welcome the opportunity to explore in other directions. The hon. Member for Gower touched on a number of other parliamentary and allied committees that have a real part to play in what, in many senses, we want to be a partnership between this House, the other place and the Departments concerned. The two committees that I commend to my hon. Friend the Minister are two that I really do not need to spell out because he has played an active part in the dialogue with the parliamentary information technology committee and is certainly not unaware also of the work of the parliamentary space committee.

The key element in both Committees that I commend to the House is the widespread industrial partnership with parliamentarians. Meetings of PITCOM bring together about 100 industrial members and about 100 parliamentary members. It is therefore in the widest sense of looking at our future in science and technology in Europe that I should like to highlight some of the work and thinking within that committee. In doing so, of course, I make it plain that I am not expressing any corporate view, because that is not the way of such committees, but I can say without fear of contradiction that certain trends are evident in that committee, and they should commend themselves to the Government.

There are certain aspects of what is happening in Europe today which are already making it well nigh impossible for us to keep up with the pace of progress. I refer, for example, to the way in which transnational partnerships are altering the face of what we can either legislate for or expect to carry through in any ordered consideration of science and technology. I recite only the Siemens and Fujitsu merger, Bull of France with IBM in the United States, and now ICL is owned by Japan but maintaining, I trust, important research and manufacturing facilities in this country.

On defence technology, I join those who have pointed to the obvious problem in seeing a substantial reduction in defence research and development, which one must hope to see in many ways transferred across in terms of Government research and development to the civil sector. Even within defence, there are still important technologies which can greatly affect the pattern of what we are discussing. For example, I refer to the European fighter aircraft. I hope that our German colleagues will think long and hard before they surrender a vital part of defence technology which, once lost, would be extremely difficult to replace and would put us in a position of facing, inevitably, a virtually sole supplier from the United States, with the financial penalties that that could entail.

I now refer to information technology. We have heard about EUREKA, but I should like to talk about ESPRIT. As hon. Members know, it seeks to make breakthroughs in micro-electronics, software, business systems for offices, the so-called intelligent homes, and the whole sector of computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture. There is inevitably a pragmatic point that we must examine. I see no point in arguing at the moment about intervention as opposed to the free market, because we have in place, as I have said, the commercial dynamism of transnational mergers and so on and, already, the fourth framework programme, about which my right hon. Friend spoke.

I want simply to draw on the experience of ESPRIT so far and to urge my hon. Friend the Minister to recognise that two problems are clearly demonstrated. There is still a substantial trade deficit in IT within Europe, and I hope that we can address that through our attempts to support research and development. Perhaps nearer to home, there

[Sir Michael Marshall]

is a considerable problem of delay—the delay which arises from the bureaucratic process and which I very much hope can be tackled by my hon. Friend and his Department.

The classic case at the moment might be related to high-definition television. Hon. Members will recall that, years ago, we were well advanced through the IBA's research at Winchester and in the BBC to carry forward that process. The commission has moved in that matter and has set a standard and an agenda. The resulting delay and arguments over standards and over bringing the product to market mean a real danger that Japan may be able to drive on the process and scoop the pool.

I now refer to the separate matter of space activities and, in particular, the work within the European Space Agency. Again, I am drawing on my experience in the parliamentary space committee. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) is present, as he is a member of that Committee and has played a valuable part in its work. There is a process at which we should look more widely. Our £150 million space budget, modest though that may be, is matched many times over by other members of the European Space Agency. We, as the fourth largest contributor after France, Germany and Italy, are seeing a far greater spread for our R and D expenditure than in almost any other industry with public financing of that kind.

What has been achieved? We have been able to become the project leaders in communications satellites in and outside the United States. However, I am bound to say that we are now suffering at the hands not only of American competition, which still draws extensively on underwriting from defence expenditure, but perhaps of a miscalculation of what is near market development. The cut in funding in that regard has meant that we are seeing the market slipping away and the substantial redundancies at British Aerospace in Stevenage, which of course are much to be regretted. Nevertheless, I welcome the fact that our concentration within ESA on remote sensing and earth observation has proved fruitful.

I am greatly encouraged by our committee's correspondence with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister earlier this year. He indicated his enthusiasm for using earth observation from satellites for global environmental control. He regarded that as a natural subject for international action at the Earth summit. In the pressure of other matters, I feel that this subject may not have been given the full attention in Rio that it deserves, but I welcome the advice that I have received from my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, which suggests that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's initiative has been followed up. I am glad to see the DTI and the Office of Public Service and Science acting together, along with No. 10. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade can fairly claim to be one of the founders of the European Space Agency. There is every prospect of that process being carried further forward.

There has recently been in this country a meeting of the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites, which brought together space agencies around the world, including agencies from Russia and China, and international environment officials. That has helped to sensitise Earth summit participants to the unique vantage point that space provides in tackling the problems of drought, flooding, deforestation and pollution. I have no doubt that those matters will be followed up in due course, but I want particularly to encourage my hon. Friend the Minister and the OPSS to begin to think about the common threads, how the peace dividend or the convergence between civil and military technology in space as in other sectors can be more fully utilised. That matter would have to go across Departments. Much as I respect the British National Space Centre, the fact that it does not have its own budget and has had essentially a co-ordinating role has not enabled us to exploit some technologies in the way that I would wish.

I am conscious of the needs of hon. Members who would like to speak. I am sorry that I cannot develop a little more fully some of the arguments that I would wish to develop. However, I hope that I have been able to show the House and my hon. Friend that, in the emergence of the Office of Science and Technology, many of us hope that there will be an opportunity to pull together the common threads across the public and private sectors and military and civil sectors to the greater advantage not only of our country but of Europe and of the wider world.

8.18 pm

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): In making my first contribution, I crave the customary indulgence of the House to say something of my constituency of Plymouth, Devonport and of those who served the constituency before me. As though making my maiden speech were not difficult enough, I shall contrive to make my observations relevant to science and technology. With no disrespect to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was rather sad that Madam Deputy Speaker left the Chair, as we were adversaries in the 1987 election. I had intended to recall that I graciously permitted her to win and that that would give her good cause to call me regularly in the House.

The constituency of Devonport, which I am proud to represent, lies to the west of Plymouth. Its boundary to the north borders on our national park of Dartmoor and to the south is the Plymouth sound. It is one of the most beautiful ports in Britain. Its links to the west over the River Tamar to Cornwall are made by two fine examples of the success of British technology. In 1859 Prince Albert opened the Royal Albert bridge, the greatest triumph of our most celebrated engineer—Isambard Kingdom Brunel—and in the late 1960s the road suspension bridge was opened, completing the link with Cornwall.

Originally, the area was rather unflatteringly known as Plymouth dock. The name was resented by local people, who not only had a fierce sense of independence but grew larger in number than the people of Plymouth, so the status of the area was elevated from dock to port. To confer on it its true sense of significance, it became the port of Devon—hence Devonport.

Devonport Royal Naval dockyard has served our Navy over the centuries from the time of wooden ships to the present day. The unfaltering service that the work force of the dockyard has given to the country in times of war is beyond measure. It gave service not only in the two world wars but more recently in the Falklands and Gulf wars. It is particularly sad to note that the role of Devonport dockyard has been severely reduced. Even in the past five years, the work force has been reduced from 13,000 to little

more than 5,000. Most seriously of all, engineering and technological skills are being lost to the local economy. The number of young men and women being trained in those skills has been massively curtailed.

It will not surprise hon. Members to note that Plymouth has one of the fastest rates of unemployment growth in Britain. I see a major part of my work in the House as being to help sustain those who are in work and vigorously to champion the cause of those who are not. I shall argue in the months and years ahead that Devonport dockyard has an essential role to play in the maintenance of our fleet.

I should like to turn my attention to my predecessors, as is the tradition. My last four predecessors have been varied, most able and extremely interesting. Each in their own way has made a special contribution to the House, and indeed to British politics. I may be able to claim a unique feature for my constituency in that all three of its former Members of Parliament since 1945 are still alive.

From 1923, Devonport was represented by Leslie Hore-Belisha, a Liberal and a man of prodigious energy and superb eloquence. He was best known for the introduction of the highway code and, of course, the Belisha beacon—a simple but useful piece of technology. Rather less well known but more important were his efforts as Secretary of State for War, without which Britain might not have been ready for action in 1939.

Leslie Hore-Belisha was followed by Michael Foot, who served Devonport with great distinction between 1945 and 1955. This was a most challenging time of profound difficulty for the city of Plymouth after it was so badly bombed, leaving thousands of people homeless. I am disappointed that, as he has declined to take a peerage, I shall not be able to visit the other place to hear his matchless oratory. As ever, he is faithful to long-held principle in advance of personal elevation.

Michael Foot was temporarily relieved of his place on these Benches by the energetic Dame Joan Vickers, who served Devonport with vigour. She is remembered by older constituents and older Members of Parliament with considerable affection. Michael Foot fought tirelessly for the homeless of Plymouth, and Dame Joan Vickers spoke at length on the subject in her maiden speech in 1955. I wonder whether either of them imagined that a new Member of Parliament in 1992 would need to speak for the homeless just as strongly. I intend to fight the cause of the 6,000 people on the Plymouth city council waiting list with the same vigour.

The three Members of Parliament to whom I have referred were elected from three different political parties. Now I can claim a unique feature for my constituency without any fear of contradiction. During his 13 years as Member of Parliament for Devonport, David Owen single-handedly managed to give his support to four different parties. That is a record which I have no intention of emulating. Nor do I have any intention of forming my own party.

I believe that David Owen is threatening to publish a book of his verse, so I thought that it might be appropriate if I quoted a little poetry. It is as though Dryden, 300 years before, predicted David Owen's coming in his poem, "Absalom and Achitophel":

> "A man so various that he seemed to be
> Not one, but all mankind's epitome:
> Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
> Was everything by starts and nothing long".

I wish him well in the other place.

I shall restrict my comments about science and technology to the place where it is kindled in people's minds—in the schools. That is a matter of which I have some experience, after 22 years of teaching mathematics in comprehensive schools. Science changes our lives. It has become a determining factor in many aspects of our lives. Huge advances have been made in our living standards in recent decades through the appliance of scientific knowledge. But just as Isambard Kingdom Brunel, who built the great Royal Albert bridge which straddles the Tamar taking the trains from Devonport to Cornwall, did not receive public recognition of his genius as an engineer, so today society does not hold people who make things in the same esteem as those who make money.

Many strides forward have been made in school science since the war, but we must always remember that the quality of learning never exceeds the quality of teaching. The quality of teaching in science and technology is closely related to the enthusiasm of the teacher and the quality of the resources, and implementation of the national curriculum has done nothing to enhance either. A doctor seeks a cure for a disease, but the national curriculum is the cure for which there is no known disease. Its only service has been to prove that the Government are the least appropriate body to provide detailed instructions on how to teach children.

Recent education policy has left us with several unresolved paradoxes. Schools were supposed to be locally managed, yet the Government are deciding every last detail of the curriculum, not least in science and technology. The national curriculum is supposed to be efficacious for state schools yet is not required in the private sector, where those who promote it send their children. Opted-out schools and city technology colleges have been given millions of pounds for new buildings, while local authority schools crumble.

Children used to be taught science. Now we are told that the curriculum is delivered. Once one accepts the market culture that is permeating our schools, one can easily make a prognosis of the use to which the results of testing will be put. Schools will be placed in performance tables, which will put increasing pressure on the schools to deliver that which can be tested. That will jeopardise exciting and challenging projects and work of intrinsic interest to children because such work leads to the course work—which is so much disliked by our Prime Minister. That is an extraordinarily myopic view of education. It not only drags us back to the failed payment by results of the Victorian era but constitutes a shabby preparation for life in the 21st century. The spirit that drove Brunel's genius was not kindled by dreary standard assessment tests of the kind carried out this week, working within the straitjacket of a national curriculum.

The Government's proposals for initial teacher training leave little room for optimism. Her Majesty's inspectors have identified ad nauseam the shortage of science and technology teachers in our schools, especially our primary schools, yet the responsibility for training future science teachers is to be placed in those schools. If that policy is seen through, it will guarantee that science remains in the shade. Teacher training in science and technology has to balance the need to learn teaching skills with the need for exciting new ideas to come out of our institutes of higher education.

[Mr. David Jamieson]

A recent survey in Devon showed that 26 per cent. of all pupils were being taught in temporary buildings—a record that is probably shared by many other authorities. While many of those buildings may be in good condition and of good quality, they further depress good science and technology teaching. In such buildings storage space is seldom more than minimal, power points and basic services are lacking, and security is poor so that expensive equipment such as computers is rarely found. That is one feature of our schooling system which is depressing our ability to teach complex subjects demanding much equipment.

I have touched on the fact that problems exist in science and technology education and many other hon. Members have mentioned it in the debate. The House will be in no doubt that I believe that present policies are inadequate. There is still great willingness and energy in our schools. There is an overwhelming need for young scientists to help to rejuvenate our faltering economy, but they will not emerge in the quantity and of the quality that our country demands unless we create an environment for success. That success will come to our schools and colleges only if we allow a spirit of adventure to prevail, if we encourage new ideas and differences of approach, and if we acknowledge the achievements of our engineers and scientists.

8.31 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): It is always a great pleasure to follow a maiden speech, and it is a special pleasure to follow that of the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson), who spoke with great humour, knowledge and passion. He knows his area well and speaks of it with great love and affection. He summarised the history of its previous incumbents and perhaps he will be as colourful a Member of the House as his predecessors—we shall be the richer for it if he is.

I was especially taken by the hon. Gentleman's championing of Isambard Kingdom Brunel—an engineer and a successful capitalist, although that was perhaps not the thread that the hon. Member wished most to draw upon. However, it demonstrated how success in society and in industry depended then on the blend of engineer and business man, and perhaps we should bear that in mind today. I am sure that we shall all look forward to the hon. Gentleman's future contributions to debates.

May I join colleagues who earlier congratulated the Government on the appointment of the Office of Science and of my right hon. and hon. Friends as the two Ministers in charge of it. I shall mention some of the practical implications of that appointment, but we should also recognise that the changes have considerable symbolic importance. I hope that we may now mark, once and for all, the end of the myth that the United Kingdom can prosper on service industries alone. I hope that we can now acknowledge that the science and technology base and the prosperity of the country go hand in hand. We must now recognise that success in virtually all the industries of the 21st century will be knowledge-based. Investment in knowledge, research and technology will make those industries successful.

The higher profile of science and technology in public life and in politics, which has been brought about by the changes, is typified by the fact that this is one of the first debates on the subject in Government time, by the large amount of interest in the debate, by the high quality of speeches and by the inclusion on the Order Paper later this evening of a motion seeking approval for support for the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology. I was on the Information Committee that produced the report and I believe that it will be a valuable adjunct to the knowledge and research facilities available to Members of the House.

Inevitably, the creation of the Office of Science has been well received and has raised great expectations, and it is important that those should be based in reality, because a new pot of gold will not be readily available. This year, we face a tough public expenditure round, and it is essential that public expenditure is brought under control and inflation forced even lower, as much for science and technology as for many other aspects of our society.

The relatively high cost of capital has been one of the prime causes of short termism in industry, and science and technology have suffered particularly from it. Against that background, the Government's research and development budget compares well with that of our competitor countries. The increases planned between now and 1995 do the Government great credit.

Leaving funding elements aside, vital strategic and structural issues have to be tackled. I shall devote my comments to raising questions to add to those asked by my right hon. Friend in opening the debate and to responses to some of his questions. Perhaps I should first declare an interest, as my law firm acts for several institutions of higher education and companies involved in high technology.

One of the key problems perpetually besetting research and development in this country is that it crosses so many departmental boundaries and budgets. It causes the greatest difficulty in strategic decision making, it makes it difficult to assess priorities between the research and development programmes of different departments, and getting cross-departmental budget contributions is like getting blood out of a stone.

My hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) mentioned the space industry and it is perhaps one of the best examples of a vital industry where so many science and technology issues are at the sharp end of development, but which covers the range of interests of so many different departments—Trade and Industry, Defence, Education, the Environment and the Home Office all have a spoke in that industry. We did not begin to get a coherent voice until all those interests were brought together within the British National Space Centre. My hon. Friend said how successful the BNSC has been in co-ordinating Britain's approach to the European Space Agency, in developing proper programmes within the agency and suggesting priorities for Britain's expenditure., which have stood us in good stead. It has been successful, but with more muscle it could have been more successful.

I look to the Office of Science to take a strategic overview of science and technology, perhaps on the model in microcosm that BNSC has been. In so doing, I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to beware of rejection symptoms from other Departments, which have so often in the past stifled changes in the governmental system.

My hon. Friend's first task is to mark out his Department's territory practically. Inevitably, there must be an overlap between research and development

functions of his and of other Departments. During the next few months he will produce a White Paper, and many people will look carefully at the details of how it tackles those overlaps. The Office of Science must not be seen to be trying to build empires for their own sakes, because other Departments are closer to their needs and, as customers, may be able to identify their research and development requirements most effectively.

The Office of Science must have a key voice in policy making and prioritising and should use its budget to fill gaps in basic and strategic research and development. It must avoid buck passing by other Departments, which are trying to shift some of their research and development on to another Department's budget. As several hon. Members have said, the Office of Science's most urgent priority is to ensure that money that has gone into the Ministry of Defence's research and development budget is not lost as MOD expenditure is cut, but is transferred to civil research and development.

Another key problem that flows freely from that is how and where to distribute research and development funds from the Government. The Committee of Directors of Polytechnics is concerned that the new Higher Education Funding Council structure and remit will hit the new universities adversely compared with the established universities. Most of their research and development is much closer to the marketplace and their existing research and development infrastructure is much less developed than that of the established universities and will take time to develop to the point where they may be more able to compete on equal terms under peer group assessment. On the other side, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals is concerned about the way in which the Office of Science will interact with the Department for Education and, in particular, how shifts of focus on science and technology will affect funding for research in the humanities. Those questions must be answered carefully.

I recognise the need for centres of research excellence and for large-scale interdepartmental collaboration in depth. It is difficult to predict where advances in science and technology will come from or which building blocks of knowledge will have to be combined to make a particular advance. Obviously, there is an advantage in operating within a large centre of excellence. Equally, there must be a mechanism for evolution and change. Young, bright academics and new universities must have their chance, too. Strategic funding judgments may be made in the Office of Science but peer group assessment must be the best way of choosing between individual projects within those priorities. I hope that the system as a whole will not operate within too rigid a straitjacket.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster must take a strong lead also in our European involvement. Clearly, strong science ministries in other member states have given those countries an edge in the implementation of their policies and the way in which the take-up of European programmes by their domestic industries has developed. It is not before time that he is in there pitching for Britain.

I add my voice to those that have commented on the need for a science and technology Select Committee. It is a vital adjunct to the work of the Department. A Department without a Select Committee stimulating it and supporting both it and science and technology will be that much poorer. The experiment with the Office of Science may well founder unless there is a strong Select Committee supporting it.

I move from the problems of structure in government to the problems in industry and academia. I shall draw attention to several specific points, albeit briefly. The problem of short-termism in industry cannot be ignored when considering science and technology. Different people will attribute different causes to it. High inflation and high interest rates make the cost of capital so high that long-term pay-backs have become difficult in our economy in recent years. I hope that inflation and interest rates will come down to such a level that we will not be at a relative disadvantage to our industrial competitors.

That is a core problem which my right hon. Friend must address. Equally, he must address the relatively low esteem and pay for engineers that has been traditional in this country. Other countries hold engineers in the highest esteem, in particular Germany and the United States. It is one of our great weaknesses that we have a curious cultural block that prevents us from doing the same.

There has been a patchy use of universities by industry and variable technology transfer. Before I came to the House I was involved in technology transfer from the legal viewpoint and I have seen considerable advances being made. Nevertheless, we must be aware of the use that countries such as the United States and Japan make of their universities. Their links between universities and industries are much more profound than ours. Moreover, others are not standing still while we improve our perfomance.

There is a funding gap between the research in universities and the development stage at which British companies are prepared to pick up the work and carry it forward. The Office of Science must address that gap. Equally, it must address the problem that, in seeking funding from industry, universities are being driven too much towards near-market activities, rather than being able to focus on long-range, basic research and development that is fundamental to the long-term prosperity and health of our scientific base.

Industry is improving its performance steadily. A recent report by Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte shows that there is a much more frequent launch of new products and many more staff working on new technology in Britain than three years ago. That is a vindication of the Government's shift of funding to basic research and development in the hope that industry will draw in some of the research and development that is closer to the marketplace.

Others wish to speak, so I shall be brief. One of the great problems facing us is that on the whole people in the House and in industry, and people in the civil service who make decisions, do not have a scientific background against which to assess the projects and problems that they must deal with. Therefore, I welcome the decision to broaden the curriculum up to GCSE level, so that more people have a base in science and can understand at least the language of the papers put up to them.

I am sceptical whether one can both broaden and deepen the curriculum at the same time, without it having a profound impact further upstream in the universities. A-levels have been a bulwark of protection against the erosion of excellence in our academic system. If that bulwark is eroded, we shall have to face up to the consequence of at least four-year courses in universities in science and technology. That would be the inevitable conclusion.

Our science and technology graduates are a vital national resource. They will become increasingly

[Mr. Spencer Batiste]

important as this century fades into the next, because it is upon their knowledge and training that our economic success and prosperity will depend. We do extremely well in international comparisons. Only the United States does better than us in terms of graduates in science and technology. We stand international comparison well, particularly against our European Community competitors.

My hon. Friend the Minister must consider whether we do well in providing a career structure in the academic world for our science graduates. The prevalence of short-term contracts is a great problem in higher education. A key issue that must be addressed is the development of a career structure in the academic world that will encourage the brightest academics to stay in it.

I am not trying to offer solutions to these problems. My right hon. Friend said in his opening remarks that he was taking in questions and ideas. It is in that spirit that I put forward these comments to him. I recognise that the success of the Department will be crucial to the success of our country and its industrial endeavours in the years to come. I wish him and his Department the best of good fortune. We have a great deal riding upon its success.

8.47 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I congratulate the Government on setting up the Office of Public Service and Science, and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on his appointment. I am sure that the office is a major step forward for science and scientific research.

Once upon a time I was a research chemist. Then I lectured in chemistry at a college of higher education. Over the years I diversified first into environmental science and now into my present career. Throughout those years I have maintained my interest in scientific research. I have never ceased to be fascinated by new discoveries. I have two younger brothers who throughout the 1980s have been involved in medical research. I hear from them of the difficulties in funding medical research and the poor morale of the people involved in it.

My general impression throughout the past decade has been that there is a deep malaise in science which permeates every level—schools, universities and research departments. In schools, there is a major shortage of qualified science teachers—28 per cent. of chemistry teachers have no post-A-level qualifications. As we heard earlier, 20 per cent. of those teaching chemistry to A-level and 30 per cent. of physics teachers have not been trained appropriately. Clearly, it is not good enough for other subject teachers to teach physics, chemistry or biology.

Another problem in schools is the lack of science equipment. A recent study conducted by Her Majesty's inspectorate of education concluded that spending on science equipment in state schools averages £5·62p per pupil per year. That is a fifth of that spent in the independent sector. If private schools think that such a level of investment in equipment is needed, surely it is needed throughout the education system. That lack of equipment is another handicap facing those in the younger generation who want a career in science.

Last year, when the A-level results were published, those for science generally were good. However, the number of students studying A-level mathematics was down, nationally, by 5·9 per cent., while the numbers studying A-level physics and A-level chemistry were down by 4·3 per cent. and 3·8 per cent respectively. That is unhealthy for the future of our manufacturing base and for our future prosperity. The following week I read an article in *The Times Educational Supplement*, which said that 1991 was not an isolated year. Under the headline

"Science A-level entry falls for the 10th year"

the article began:

"The number of students taking A-level science exams has fallen for the 10th year running, according to figures published this week by GCE boards."

There has been a disturbing swing away from the study of science. Last month, the Institute of Physics published a report on the importance of physics to the United Kingdom economy. It said that 29 per cent. of all manufacturing jobs are in physics-based industries. Curiously, it is a growth industry thanks to the computer, electronics and similar industries in which output, in cash terms, has doubled in the past 10 years.

The section on education contains some disturbing statistics, which show that the number of science graduates has dropped from 2,510 in 1983 to 2,286 in 1991. That is equivalent to a drop of 10 per cent. in the number of physics graduates at a time when the total number of all graduates is increasing. As a proportion of the total number of graduates, the number of physics graduates has dropped from 2·16 to 1·78 per cent. That is at a time when the number of physics graduates has increased by 15 per cent. in Germany and by 61 per cent. in Japan. We will be unable to compete internationally unless we train scientists at home.

Why has there been a swing away from the study of science? When I started my university work in science, the Dainton report had just been published on such a swing. I do not know whether things improved during the 1970s, but 25 years on it seems as though we are back where we started. The problems caused by teachers' qualifications and the lack of equipment may have led to the drift from science, but another fundamental reason is that pupils specialise far too early. They have to choose between science or arts at the age of 14 or 15, and, by that age, the amount of useful science that one understands is rather limited. We need a broader A-level curriculum so that the study of science is compulsory until the age of 18.

The study of science presents special difficulties. When I examine the chemistry syllabuses for O-level and A-level and compare them with those that I studied, I see that A-level work now forms part of the O-level syllabus and that the A-level syllabus contains some of the material that I studied at university. From year to year, A-level examinations in science have become progressively more difficult. I do not believe that English literature, history and economics have become progressively more difficult to study. However, the demands made on our 15 and 17-year-olds studying for science GCEs and A-levels are greater now than they were a generation ago. Although we should not lower standards, perhaps we should consider narrowing the curriculum or introducing longer courses in higher education.

Some other hon. Members, especially my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes), referred to the bad image that science now has. The public image has been dented by the environmental crisis of the past 20 years. I accept that there is some truth in that argument. For example, pollution may have given chemistry a bad

reputation, and nuclear weapons and nuclear reactors have presented physicists with a public relations problem. As we have seen from the Earth summit in Rio, the paradox is that to solve the world's environmental problems we need scientists to develop clean technologies and renewable sources of energy.

Throughout the past decade, the university research budget has been cut and rationalised. I am concerned about the new funding mechanisms for university research, by which money is directed towards the bigger universities. As a result, some universities will be dedicated to research, some to teaching and some will combine both functions. It is important to have a wide research base in all our universities, because that will improve the work of lecturers and professors and their teaching will be more stimulating if they are involved in research.

The Government's investment in civil research and development has dropped from 0·72 per cent. of gross domestic product in 1981 to 0·52 per cent. in 1990. The Government are cutting their contribution to research and we are falling behind other countries. The Government, by establishing the OPSS, have, in a sense, adopted Labour party policy. May I suggest that they look to the funding of science and consider the targets that we set at the election to increase total funding in research and development to 2·5 per cent. of GDP, which includes an increased Government contribution of 0·8 per cent.? That money is desperately needed for science research and the future prosperity of Britain. We must find it.

8.58 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I welcome the establishment of a Government Department which has at its core the principles of encouraging science and technology. It seems only a few weeks ago that the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry proclaimed how he wanted his Department to disappear. I gain much encouragement from the speed at which the political winds can change. The very idea that a Secretary of State for Trade and Industry might wish to see his role and his Department disappear must have given our industrial competitors the belief that we had a death wish about any idea of competing on the world stage.

While science is at the start of the process that eventually delivers usable goods to the consumer, the problem we face as a nation embraces the whole process —all the way from scientific breakthrough, via commercial adaptation, to consumer utilisation. Our relative failure to deliver is encapsulated by the unsatisfactory relationship on finance that industry has with the City. The circle is continuous, with the financial institutions arguing that market forces dictate their actions and industry complaining that short-termism prevents it having a long-term future. My hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) referred to that. Time permits me to expand on it only slightly.

The current debate argues that takeovers are a reaction to market forces. That, in isolation, is correct, but it conveniently ignores the fact that the chances are that, when a takeover occurs, the company in question has been abandoned by its financial backers—the institutional investors—for the quick buck.

The individual aspects of financial support are self-sustaining in their argument. But only when one examines the system as a whole does one begin to understand the scale of the economic disaster that our industrial financing system leaves in its wake. A glance at investment percentages, research and training, as against profits, GNP or any other criteria, shows how we lag behind our major industrial competitors, and the results are only too apparent.

The largest 100 companies follow a dividend policy that pays two or three times as much as our foreign competitors, particularly Germany. Indeed, the Germans recognise the debilitating effect of large dividend payments year after year, resulting from a policy of giving tax relief on dividend payments up to 20 per cent. of company profits, and then no more.

Those pressures push companies into strategies that maintain profits and dividends for today. Hon. Members may say that that is satisfactory because we like to see safe corporate strategies, away from organic growth. Sadly, the same picture emerges in manufacturing investment, where, the figures show, we are near the bottom of the G7 league table. They show that our culture pushes us away from areas of international risk and help to explain our low investment, in world terms, as a percentage of research and development financed by industry.

In contrast, business investment has rocketed over the past few years, with record figures of growth in areas such as financial services, property, distribution and hotels, all protected from international competition by property-based assets directed into this country.

That lack of long-term vision starts with our banking system, and it is interesting to make comparisons with our competitors. Between 1985 and 1990, the National Westminster bank increased its United Kingdom lending by three times. More than half of it was lending for one year or less. In 1990, the Deutschebank lent more than half the money that it made available, for over four years.

That is the basis on which British manufacturers and business men must try to invest. Banks in the United Kingdom are lenders of money. In the German system, like the Japanese, much depends on confidence between investors. The German banks not only provide the finance but invest direct. They hold seats on company boards. In the top 100 German companies, 179 seats are held by banks, an involvement unheard of in Britain.

A contested takeover in Germany is not unknown, but it is exceedingly rare. Here, it is the order of the day. I am led to the inevitable conclusion that long-term investment plans lead to long-term growth and ensure that the company stays the course, with decisions being made by directors without the spectre of a takeover dominating the board room.

In the previous Session of Parliament, two industrial knights of the realm came to speak to a certain Committee with which I am involved, and I asked them about concern over takeovers, and the problems of maintaining dividend levels and long-term investment. One of them agreed with me, and one said that it did not worry him. Two weeks later, the one who was not worried was furiously increasing his dividend to try to fight off a takeover bid which had suddenly been launched upon him out of the blue.

I am convinced that the House should consider the financial changes necessary to try to encourage the long-term investment view. For example, should the financial bodies which lend money lose their creditor position if their shareholding goes over 5 per cent? But I must leave that subject and make my last two points.

[Mr. Richard Page]

I welcome what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said about the LINK projects, and how we need to build on Britain's fine record in basic science. That has not always been perceived to be the case, as is illustrated by some comments by the vice-chancellor of Queen's university, Belfast:

"Direct approaches from companies seeking technology were rare, and in every technology transfer agreement with industry, the university has made the first move."

That was endorsed by Dr. Webb, of the physics department in Oxford university, who said:

"My research group is frequently visited—typically, twice a year—by trade delegations of up to 20 Japanese industrial scientists; the number of similar visits I get from research scientists in British industry is negligible."

Therefore, I welcome what my right hon. Friend said about trying to promote that link.

Lastly, I declare an interest in that I am the honorary treasurer of the leukaemia research fund—a charity which donates about £10 million a year to research in connection with blood disorder diseases, to try to bring about a cure. Concern is rising in many of the medical charities which give hundreds of millions of pounds a year towards research, and that, against some of the research projects, charities are being asked to contribute to the overheads of the institution where the funds are going, to research chosen projects.

I put it to my right hon. Friend that that is a dangerous precedent being pushed by some institutions. I do not blame them for asking for money, but it would be exceedingly difficult for charities asking for contributions to be told, "I do not think that I would like to give money, because my donation will pay for the upkeep of the bricks and mortar of an institution." The generous people of this country want to give their money for specific research and projects that they can see and can identify with a particular charity.

I am aware that I have concentrated rather too much on finance rather than science in my few words, but I shall finish, as I started, by welcoming the creation of the new Department and the appointment of my right hon. Friend to his position. In the fulness of time, I shall look for a smoother passage, from basic science through all the processes that lead to the use of a particular product by the consumer—and, obviously, eventually to the benefit of the British economy.

9.8 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): This has been a surrealist debate. The horror of what is taking place in reality in my constituency and in many others mocks what is happening in the Chamber, where we have heard a range of views, many of which are flaccid and flatulent.

Hon. Members have expressed precisely the same sentiments as those heard in the debate of 1985—I invite hon. Members to read the report of that debate—and the debates of 1975, 1965 and 1955. They have repeated the old mantras about the great tragedy of Britain—that we invent things but we do not manufacture them. They have again asked the question: why is there no link between academia and industry?

What is happening in Newport? The Chancellor of the Duchy said that INMOS was in trouble. It is not, but he might have thought so had he been in my constituency five weeks ago and seen the stepper machine—worth £1 million—being dumped in a rubbish skip. He might have thought INMOS was in trouble if he had been in Newport four months ago and had seen similar equipment being shipped to Singapore, Malaysia, France and Italy.

INMOS is not in trouble, but is on the brink of having the greatest success of its remarkable 13-year history. The success is to come with the semiconductor, an issue on which so many companies have fallen by the wayside. The tragedy is the direct fault of the Government. INMOS was set up as a Government initiative to give Britain a stake in the sector. Over the years, it has gone through horrendous periods, but has survived.

One of my hon. Friends suggested that one day we might introduce an honour for scientists. It might well be the Order of the Transputer, but I fear that it may be the Chevalier du Transputeur or L'Ordinaire del Trasputo, as we are robbed of the honour. The transputer is an enormous success: 50,000 were sold in 1990 at a cost of £15 million, and they are already used in laser printing machines in hon. Members' offices, as well as in video telephones.

In addition, the new transputer T9000 will be produced in great numbers in combination with IBM, which has a guaranteed market. It will be used at the forefront of technology, on the exciting horizon of those miraculous virtual reality machines which have marvellous, almost three-dimensional definition, and it will also be used in colour fax machines. It has a hundred and one new uses, and was used in the smart weapons of the Gulf war, which were life-saving. The loss of life occurred due to the old-fashioned, cruder weapons, such as the multi-launch rocket systems and cluster bombs.

There is a marvellous future for the transputer. Why is it going abroad? We have six days in which to save it. The decision to send INMOS abroad and siphon the jobs from here will be irrevocable by early next week. I have appealed to the Department, and written to the Prime Minister and the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Trade and Industry many times without receiving any intelligent response.

We could have negotiated a deal to obtain investment, which is what is needed. The French and Italian Governments are investing in the transputer. Baroness Thatcher hated the idea of INMOS, and did not like the notion of a nationalised company. She also spurned the concept of a partnership between Government and industry—a view not shared by our immediate competitors in Italy and France. The Italians are so enthusiastic about the future of the transputer that they are providing 80 per cent. of the investment, while the French are providing a similar amount. The former French Prime Minister, Edith Cresson, took a personal interest in the transputer and knows a great deal about it, but we have not seen such interest here.

INMOS was set up by the Government and sold off—virtually given away—by them, first to the private sector and then to a nationalised company in which the primary shareholders are the French and Italian Governments. We know that, when political muscle has to be flexed, the French and Italian Governments will do so, and jobs will be stolen from us.

Many accurate statements have been made tonight. All of us with a science background rejoice in the developments that have taken place and in the appointment of the Chancellor of the Duchy in his wider role. We hope that those changes will result in greater

prominence for science and scientific ideas. We have passed through the dark age of Thatcherism, an age in which the Government were riven by a bias against intelligence and science. Anything must be better than that.

I beg the Government to act swiftly to ensure that some partnership deal can be struck between INMOS, a large private British company, and the Government so that technology and jobs remain in Britain. Some will say that the company will remain European. These marvellous products are not made in Osaka or California; they are designed in Bristol and manufactured in Newport and are entirely British. Not only the transputer but the technology and skill will be lost, because they are in the genius of the people who invented the transputer and the technicians who work on it. They will be off to France and Italy unless the Government make a quick decision.

9.15 pm

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) on his excellent maiden speech and look forward to hearing him again. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) for cutting his speech to allow a couple of extra Opposition Members to speak in this important debate.

When I left school at 16, I went to work as a scientific assistant in research and development for a prominent chemical company and saw the benefits of investment in research and development. I did not spend a great deal of time with the company, but my experiences there have remained with me. Our competitors have already recognised the benefit of investment in research and development. After 13 years of neglect of science and of research and development, Britain now looks forward to some light at the end of the tunnel.

Britain occupies 10th place in the OECD list of countries investing in civil research and development. Over the past 10 years, there has been a cut, from 0·72 to 0·52 per cent., in the proportion of GDP spent on civil research. I hope that that trend will be reversed. I welcome the Chancellor of the Duchy and his vice-chancellor, the Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science, to the Dispatch Box and hope that the winding-up speech will be positive. We have heard about a change in approach. I hope that it is not just a cosmetic change of responsibility but that the Government will invest in science and technology.

I hope that we shall be told that the £28 million cut in the Science and Engineering Research Council grant for last year is to be reversed. That would enable the Daresbury laboratory in my constituency to continue as a centre of excellence, because £5 million of that cut led to the closure this year of a nuclear construction facility there. The laboratory has a worldwide reputation for nuclear physics, and its excellence is recognised by Allan Bromley, the adviser on science to President Bush. It is also recognised by the Danish professor Ben Mottleson and by the chairman of the research council, Sir Mark Richmond.

There was consternation in the scientific community when the cut was announced, because the decision was taken without a scientific review. There was dismay when it was found that the closure would not save any money, and there was outrage when it was discovered that such research will now have to be conducted abroad, probably in Strasbourg on the vivitron facility, which is not yet complete and is being staffed by physicists from the Daresbury laboratory.

The Chancellor of the Duchy has the opportunity to tell the House that the closure will not take place. When a facility is closed, we lose research, not just for the current generation of scientists and physicists but for the generations to come. The Daresbury laboratory is at the forefront of science, and little money is required to keep it going. It would make good sense for the Chancellor of the Duchy to provide it.

I look forward to that announcement for the simple reason that it will not only save 250 jobs in my constituency but will mean that generations of undergraduates, graduates and postgraduates who want to use this nuclear physical research facility can find it in their country.

The Chancellor may wish to address himself to another folly—the linear accelerator at the Daresbury laboratory, set up at a cost of £3·7 million and opened by Sir Mark Richmond, that has never been switched on and is now to be sold to Australia. That means that our scientists will have to go there if they want to use it.

If we are to hear the Chancellor beat the drum for science and technology, I hope that it is not a side drum but a big bass drum.

9.20 pm

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): I am pleased to be able to speak in the debate, partly because I am honoured to have as my constituents many of the eminent scientists who have been mentioned this evening. I am sorry that no other women Members have spoken in the debate. If we are to send the right message to women to encourage them to become involved in science and technology, we must take the lead in the House.

I congratulate the Chancellor on his appointment and, like everyone else, I welcome the creation of a separate portfolio for science and technology. For the sake of brevity, I shall confine myself to four brief points.

First, there is confusion about the overlapping roles of the new Office of Public Service and Science and the Advisory Board for the Research Councils. They both appear to have responsibility for advising the Chancellor on scientific priorities. I hope he can tell us what will happen if they give him conflicting advice.

Secondly, I am concerned not so much about the level of funding as about its unpredictability, which creates difficulties. Last year, the projected level of funds for the Medical Research Council led its grants committee radically to prune those highly rated projects that it was able to fund. However, more funds later materialised, with the result that projects of a lower rating, although still highly rated, were funded in full without pruning. Had the grants committee known the level of the funding in advance, it would have allocated its resources differently. We should take on board the fact that this is not the right way to do things.

Thirdly, lack of continuity leads talented research workers to spend more time justifying continued funding of imaginative and highly valuable projects and less time doing the research. There is no job security for research workers, who are funded on an annual basis, with the

[Mrs. Anne Campbell]

result that many of our talented people move into non-scientific sectors, with the resulting waste of their talents.

I am sure that Ministers long to boast about growth rates in scientific funding, exports, the number of science graduates and so on, but they should be ashamed of the growth rate in the brain drain. The proportion of fellows of the Royal Society living in the United States in the early 1960s was 4 per cent.; in 1984, it was 13 per cent.; in 1991, it was 20 per cent.; and in 1992, it is estimated to be 30 per cent. That is disgraceful, because it shows how the scientific community is expressing its frustration with funding mechanisms and the lack of resources here.

Fourthly, I shall deal with the Link programme, which was launched in 1986 to promote collaboration between academic institutions and industry. Companies are slow to come forward, the rules of entry to the scheme are cumbersome, and applications are processed slowly. DTI figures show that only £30 million of the £210 million originally allocated to Link have been spent. The DTI will fund only up to 50 per cent. of a programme and any support for a university is regarded as Government funding. The Link programme was designed to encourage collaboration betweeen universities and industry, but the terms and bureaucracy are such that several industrialists have said that the last thing they want is a Link programme. There is no incentive for firms to take up such programmes, and they appear to be underused.

The trouble is that industry will only fund programmes which will show a profit in two or three years, and the Department of Trade and Industry will only fund projects that industry will fund. All other projects must be funded by the SERC, which means that they are in direct competition for a much smaller fund with the whole scientific community, and the projects are assessed on scientific content rather than practical applications. A great mass of projects transfer technology from universities to industry. The pay-off may be great, but it is uncertain and several years in the future. I hope that the Minister will take that on board, beecause there are great problems with the Link programme which I hope can be sorted out.

Finally, I welcome the new structures and, in agreement with most hon. Members who have spoken tonight, I hope that a Select Committee on science and technology will be established.

9.25 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): I am slightly surprised to be called, having waited throughout the debate to speak but then thinking that I would not be called.

We are creating a vast underclass of young people who are recruited to scientific research, the cream of our society, who are being paid totally inadequate salaries. Sir Mark Richmond said that we could surely pay those young people at rates which did not involve the complete abandonment of rationality. To pay someone with a first class degree only about £4,000 per annum is to induce him to leave the country.

For example, Heriot-Watt university found that during the past 10 years out of about 124 PhD students 55 had gone to the United States. We have created a group of people who are being badly rewarded. One of the things that the Under-Secretary of State should have on his conscience—apparently we are to call him the vice-chancellor—is the stain on his character resulting from the introduction of student loans. They have made matters even worse for those researchers. Having acquired a debt of £2,000, our best young scientists are then asked to work for £4,000 a year. That is not sensible.

I hope that the Chancellor, in his difficult task of steering a course between the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Education and many other Departments, will be bold when he sees that things are not working. The abolition of the binary divide was welcomed on both sides of the House, but the way in which it is being carried out will damage science and the higher education sector. The dual support mechanism was a pillar of research funding in Britain and that is being weakened. The eight traditional established universities of Scotland used to receive research funding as of right, depending on the numbers in the university.

What has happened is that a substantial sum has been transferred to the research councils. The money that is to remain with the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council is to be competed for. It is not to be competed for only by the eight existing universities which received research money, but by 25 institutions—eight existing universities and 17 former central institutions.

There is a mix of messages. We are getting rid of the binary divide, but the former central institutions are not to change their mission. They are to remain as they were. That cannot happen because research in the academic world is top of the heap; research is the means by which one gets prestige. If one is a teacher, one's reputation stays in the classroom. If one is a researcher, one's reputation travels across the world. It is through publication and research that one will get promotion and prestige.

The way in which the binary divide is being abolished will be deeply damaging to the universities and to research. I hope that when the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster looks at the way in which the binary divide is being abolished he will consider that problem. If he decides that the mix between research council money and the money which comes from the funding councils is not right, I hope that he will be bold enough to say so.

9.31 pm

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): Such is life. Having prepared an hour-long speech just in case nobody turned up to keep the debate going, I find myself reduced to a truncated version of what I intended to say. Most of it has already been said, if not by Opposition Members, by Conservative Members. That is probably just as well.

I shall refer briefly to speeches by Labour Members and I am sure that the Minister will do likewise to speeches by Conservative Members. I am not downgrading my respect for the views expressed by Conservative Members. I found that little, if anything, was said with which I disagreed.

Many of my hon. Friends have spoken, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) and my hon. Friends the Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins), for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) and for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington). I am sure that all of them will contribute greatly to our debates on science and technology in the future.

I listened with great enjoyment to the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell). When he talked about the dangers of genetic enhancement, I had a vision of a sea of blonde-haired, blue-suited women with handbags sitting on the Conservative Benches in 30 years' time. That would not, of course, be genetic enhancement. I think that hon. Members get the picture. The Minister winced visibly when people started talking about the big bang. I welcome him to his position. I believe that it is the second occasion on which he has represented science in the House and I am sure that he will defend it as vigorously as he has in other activities in the House. I know that he has an interest in the history of science and I sincerely hope that his future will have a history as well.

It was a pleasure to be on the Front Bench when my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) made his maiden speech. I know his constituents and the area especially well because I was twinned with the constituency in the general election. We won one of the Plymouth seats. Sadly, we did not win the other, which may be fortunate for Madam Deputy Speaker, who was in the Chair earlier. Her gain is our loss. My hon. Friend made an excellent speech, full of humour and passion. I am glad to say that it was far more reminiscent of Michael Foot than of his immediate predecessor, to whom I listened with respect on occasions, but whom I rarely heard electrifying the House in the way Michael could.

I am sure that my hon. Friend will represent the constituency for many years. Like his colleagues who have spoken today, he brings an expertise in scientific subjects which has been sorely lacking in the House until now. It is nice to feel that there are a few more of us here now facing the serried ranks of lawyers, accountants and graduates. I mean no offence to those who are here this evening. It was a great speech; I enjoyed listening to it. I am glad that I was here when my hon. Friend made it.

This is a manufacturing economy. We have little else upon which to depend. To succeed in a competitive world we must sell our goods and increase our share of world trade. To do that, we must bring in new ideas and new processes, materials and products. If that is to happen, we have to ensure that there is a sound and growing research base. There must be expansion of research in university departments and in the many excellent independent research and technology organisations, as well as in industry. Our overall objective must be—preferably, within the lifetime of this Parliament, but if not, within little more than its lifetime—to increase the share of our gross domestic product that is devoted to research. We must increase it to the extent that it equals the amount devoted to research by our competitors in Japan and Germany.

There can be little doubt that British science is in difficulties. It is not just a question of quoting from what has been said by the Save British Science campaign, although its synopsis, which I am sure that Ministers have read, is excellent. Although science is now taught to younger pupils, the fact remains that last year the number of A-level presentations in maths, physics and chemistry fell. That cannot be allowed to continue. Our seed corn is drying up.

With little or no sign of an end to the recession, our manufacturing base is in equally serious difficulties. My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) spoke passionately about the problems facing INMOS. A multinational company is trying to relocate elsewhere because other European Community Governments provide more help for companies than we do. I realise that this is not a direct responsibility of Office of Public Service and Science Ministers, but it is high time that their colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry realised that if we do not match the research efforts of our European competitors, more and more INMOSes will leave this country, set up elsewhere and provide more jobs in those areas. They will be lost to the United Kingdom for ever more. Our technological base will contract. It will follow those companies into Europe. The time for action is now, if we are not to fall further behind as the world-wide recession lifts.

I do not expect Office of Public Service and Science Ministers to provide a prescription for recovery today—their time in office has been too short—but there is no shortage of scientific advice available to them. I am glad that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster referred to the open letter sent to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray). It was sent in a spirit of co-operation and good-will, a spirit that we hope will prevail, and we hope that the Chancellor will take that advice.

The advice of Sir William Barlow is equally relevant in relation to engineering. The advice sent to the Chancellor by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals is also relevant and will, I hope, be taken on board. The Chancellor of the Duchy has his advisers in ACOST. He also has the ABRC. However, if he is to obtain a full picture of what has to be done in science, he needs a wider base of advice. I hope that reports that the right hon. Gentleman is against the setting up of a Select Committee on science and technology is without foundation. Having listened to the excellent contributions to this debate from both sides of the House, I hope that he will realise that, as well as being a bit of a burden for him to bear, the Select Committee could be of great help in providing the advice that he needs.

There are many priorities for the Chancellor to consider. There are areas of research which span the whole gamut of scientific understanding, all of which will be clamouring for more and more resources. I back up the plea made by my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) for reconsideration of the closure of the Daresbury facility. At a time when research into nuclear structure and fundamental particles is growing and becoming of increasing importance, it is tragic that we should be disposing of some of the world's most renowned facilities. That is a bad start, but there are brighter spots on the horizon. There is Culham, with its direct work on the joint European Torus project, and the spin-offs that will come through the application of plasmas in industry. There are so many needs and so many demands on resources which we know are limited.

If we are to have a science Ministry, it must put the case for science clearly. The Ministers must make it plain to their colleagues in other Departments that if they want economic success in this country over the next decade and into the next century, science must be given priority. Without the seed corn there is no harvest. Without the seed corn of science, we shall not expand our industrial base and make the products that we need to sell in the next century.

There is a need for technological support for industry and I sincerely believe that it must be regionally based and

[Dr. Lewis Moonie]

taken close to industries in their own areas. Industry must be given the full range of facilities of technological audit, full information and the links with local universities that they need to develop, to innovate and to allow technology to percolate through to industry.

Given the spirit in which the debate has been conducted, I hope that the Ministers will accept that they will have our support if they vigorously press the case for science with their colleagues, especially those in the Treasury in the coming round of public expenditure bids, to ensure that science does not suffer as it has so often in the past. The time for action is now.

9.40 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): When opening this valuable debate, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy said that we in the new Office of Science and Technology are in a listening mode. I think it fair to say that there has been much to listen to in the debate. The creation of the new office, with a Cabinet Minister at its head, constitutes a departure in British science and technology policy. As has been said on both sides of the House tonight, it represents a major opportunity to deal with our science and technology problems on a more coherent basis.

As my right hon. Friend said, to do that, it has been agreed that there should be a wide-ranging White Paper in due course. Our work on that has got off to a good start tonight with this debate, which has raised so many of the interesting and important issues with which we shall have to come to grips. I shall try to deal with as many of the issues as I can at this stage. I am sure that hon. Members recognise that this is an early stage in our thinking. I shall try to respond to each speaker in turn.

I thank the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) for his open letter to my right hon. Friend. It was a constructive and thoughtful contribution on which we shall draw in our thinking. We are grateful to him and to others who have spoken tonight for their positive response to the creation of the Office of Science and Technology and the new Department. I thank them for the overall tone of their remarks.

The hon. Gentleman made a party point, so I must tell him that the significant difference between the Labour party's proposals for science and the Government's decisions is that the Labour party envisaged a Minister outside Cabinet whereas we have introduced a Cabinet Minister—accompanied, as we have now learnt, by a "vice-chancellor". I noted what the hon. Gentleman and others, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste), said about the need for the OST to have a genuine capability for taking a cross-Whitehall view of science and technology. That is what we intend to do. As my right hon. Friend said, the organisational modalities for doing that are still being developed, but this debate has contributed many constructive suggestions which we shall try to take on board.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, South developed one of his favourite themes—those of us who have listened to him on many occasions over the years will recognise it—about the need for better economic forecasting and for more Government investment in technology on the basis of such forecasting. What he said deserves careful examination, and it will get it. However, I am doubtful about the quality, availability and level of aggregation of most of the data on which his forecasts and his expenditure plans necessarily depend.

There can sometimes be a spurious precision about international comparisons. I say that as one who, to some extent, has indulged in using them in the past and no doubt will use them again in future, but we need a bit of a health warning if we are being intellectually honest, as hon. Members have tried to be.

The hon. Gentleman has a fair point about the need to try to improve the quality of data, especially about industrial R and D policies, and we will need to examine his point. I noted also what he said about investment allowances. It is good that the hon. Gentleman has taken on board the problem of dead weight in relation to tax reliefs. That is what lies behind the shift in the Labour party's thinking to the idea of tax credits. The problem—this ties in with what I said about data—is that it is very difficult to establish a base line against which increased R and D can be measured. It remains to be seen whether recent developments in France and the United States will enable them to crack the problem or whether they will simply create a new device for accountancy with mirrors. Meanwhile, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said in his Budget speech, capital allowances continue to be carefully reviewed in the Treasury.

Dr. Moonie: Does the Minister agree, though, that the dead weight of a blanket cut in corporation tax is far less efficient than promoting research and development?

Mr. Jackson: I agree with the hon. Gentleman: this is a question which needs to be thought about. It was last reviewed in 1987—perhaps we need to review it again, as it is certainly an important subject.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, South referred to organisation. Of course, that subject was dealt with by several hon. Members. I have found the hon. Gentleman's suggestions in his speech and in his open letter to be characteristically thoughtful and constructive. We shall think seriously about them in the preparation of the White Paper to which my right hon. Friend referred.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) told me that, unfortunately, he could not be present for my winding-up speech. I very much appreciated his welcome of the OST. That endorsement is especially welcome from my right hon. Friend who has such knowledge and experience in these matters. I notice particularly what he and the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) said about the need for help for science in eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union. The Government are taking a hand. We have announced a sum of £670,000 through the Royal Society, and of course we are contributing £2·4 million to the £14 million programme to help to redeploy former Soviet weapons scientists. We shall follow that matter very closely because, as my right hon. Friend said, it is important.

The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) shared a theme with my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) about the need to bang the drum for science. I cannot help pausing for a moment to congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on the balanced way in which he recognised the achievements of British

science and of British technology-based companies. It is against that constructive background that his more critical points about science education are well taken. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education to his remarks and to other remarks relating to school education, in particular by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North, the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster), the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams), and the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson). All of them made penetrating remarks about the subject.

I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) for his brief but significant choral interlude. Although he admits to scientific ignorance, he has had the benefit of experience of dealing with science in the former Department of Education and Science and of being a Treasury Minister. It is against his Treasury background that I particularly welcomed his remarks about the importance of fundamental science, coupled with the need to promote stronger interactions between the science base and the whole range of technology-based economic activities. My right hon. Friend recognised that fundamental and important point.

The hon. Member for Bath was quite right to remark in passing that statistics, especially for international comparisons, are difficult to interpret but are easy to use selectively. For example, he and several other hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Carmarthen and the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall), remarked about the falling proportion of GDP devoted to science. The simple fact is that if GDP increases, as it did in the 1980s, a falling proportion of GDP can nevertheless produce an increasing sum of money. During the 1980s, there was an increase in real terms of some 22 per cent. in the science vote. Both ways of presenting the picture are accurate, but I prefer the second way.

Mr. Hall: If the Minister is saying that there is more money available over and above inflation, why was the Science and Engineering Research Council grant cut by £28 million? If money is available, will he now make a statement about Daresbury?

Mr. Jackson: There was a 22 per cent. increase over the period. There was a substantial increase—I do not have the percentage figure in my head—in the SERC budget. I can certainly send the hon. Gentleman the figure. I speak as one who has substantial research council facilities in his constituency. It is necessary and desirable that the research councils should constantly reappraise the balance of their commitments. Those of us who have constituencies in which such activities take place must be prepared, of course, to take a constructive interest in them, but to recognise that from time to time it will be appropriate to close facilities just as from time to time it will be necessary to open facilities.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the Minister recognise that Daresbury transcends constituencies? People such as Professor Alan Shotter of the physics department at Edinburgh and people in the physics department at Liverpool and in many other places are deeply worried by the ridiculous closure of Daresbury.

Mr. Jackson: It is entirely appropriate that hon. Members should raise such questions in the House, but it is perfectly appropriate for me to make the point that the system by which we operate in Britain—it is a good system; it is not fundamentally challenged by anyone—is that decisions about scientific priorities are made by scientists. The hon. Gentleman knows so much about the subject that he will be aware that there is a great debate about the balance of commitments in the SERC between physics, chemistry, biology, and other branches of knowledge. I see the Daresbury decision against the background of that debate, which is fundamentally properly a debate among the scientists.

Mr. Dalyell: There is a prejudice against nuclear physics.

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman prefers to describe it as a prejudice. I trust our scientific advisers on that point.

I wish to answer other points made in the debate, so if the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) does not mind, I will pass on. Another point about statistics was raised in the speech by the hon. Member for Bath. He made a particular point about the numbers of United Kingdom patents granted in the United States. But the figures are different from those which he gave. The number of patents increased by more than a quarter in the period 1984-88. The figure for that period was 368,000 compared with 300,000 in the previous period of 1979-83. We could bandy statistics back and forth across the Floor of the House, and no doubt we shall, for I welcome the hon. Gentleman as spokesman for the Liberal Democrats on this issue, but we need to watch statistics carefully because they do not always necessarily tell the whole story.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan) for his wise words about the difficulties that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I may face in terms of exaggerated expectations. My hon. Friend the Member for Elmet also made that point. We shall certainly do our best, but we must all recognise that science and technology policy is a long haul. It will have to be addressed steadily over several years.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East that good fundamental science needs to be both maintained and healthily integrated with the development of technology. That point was also made by my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central made a thoughtful and significant speech which I shall read tomorrow. He referred to a possible lack of balance within the Department between our work on public service and on science. That is a point which we ought to address. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall strive hard to ensure that no such imbalance arises. The hon. Gentleman was simply wrong when he talked about the balance of funding of the Office of Public Service and Science. The overwhelming bulk of the money of which my Department disposes is constituted by the science vote.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central made some penetrating remarks about the relationship between the OPSS and the other Whitehall Departments. I agree with his assessment of the importance of that agenda. There is also much for us to reflect on in what he said about intellectual property. However, I hope that he will take

[Mr. Jackson]

note of the correction that I made when I intervened in his speech about the position of the Medical Research Council on the patenting of elements in the human genome.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Devonport on his elegant and witty maiden speech and also on his perspicacity in choosing this debate to make it, which shows taste and discrimination, and an appreciation of the really important issues. As he said, he follows in distinguished footsteps, and I hope that his political career will be as interesting and distinguished, if not as varied and colourful, as that of his immediate predecessor.

My hon. Friend the Member for Elmet made a characteristically sagacious speech and I appreciated his remarks about governmental structures—I have already commented on them—about the views in higher education on recent research, which is important and fundamental, about the need for better links between higher education institutions and industry, and the problem of career structures in academe and of the pathways between the academy and industry. Those are important topics which we must follow up and which will all be relevant.

My hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) stressed the importance of contact between my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy and myself in the OST, and the professional bodies—and I agree. We shall listen hard to them, in general and in the context of the White Paper that we shall be working on. As my hon. Friend said, I know from personal experience about the value of bodies such as PITCOM in bringing together parliamentarians, scientists and business people. Meanwhile, I noted what he said about space—a topic that my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet also picked up—which encompasses an important set of issues that the OST will consider, although, as has been said, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is in the lead on those topics.

I noted what the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) had to say about in-service training in science matters for Members of Parliament. That is primarily a matter for the House, but I shall draw his remarks to the attention of the research councils, which may be interested. As a trustee of the Industry and Parliament Trust, he may be able to take that matter up with science-based companies associated with it.

On the hon. Member for Gower's second point about UNESCO, the Foreign Secretary has said that that is under review, and I shall draw his attention to those remarks.

I welcome the change of tone in this debate compared with the previous debate on the subject in February 1991. Perhaps that is a consequence of the fact that a general election has intervened. In all events, this debate was more thoughtful and constructive and I hope that a larger measure of common ground will emerge on which we can all build. I shall try to spell out some of its features.

First, we recognise the importance of beating the drum for science, which was emphasised by several hon. Members. Science is one of the glories of our culture. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy has written an excellent article in *The Daily Telegraph* today on that theme, and we shall continue as he has begun.

Secondly, it follows that it is time to put behind us the exaggerated talk of Britain's demise as a big player in science and as a technology-based economy.

Mr. Flynn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jackson: No, I must continue.

That talk was always wildly overdone. Frankly, it did more damage to the image of British science than to the Government's image, at which it was in some part aimed. Having said that, I must admit that the British science and technology scene is not without its problems and we must all recognise that. That recognition is implicit in the creation of the new Department.

Our basic science has continued to be fundamentally healthy, but, as the debate has shown, there are problems which have to be tackled. For example, there is the question of the implications for basic research of the enormous and welcome expansion in teaching, in universities and polytechnics. The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) made a good point about that in his brief intervention.

Also, as the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) said, we must recognise the issues concerning the effectiveness of the Government's policy to promote desirable interaction between scientists and users of technology—in jargon, between strategic science and generic technologies. At the same time we must recognise issues concerning the balance between different areas of Government-supported science and technology.

There is important common ground on the fact that industry needs to think more seriously about the level of investment in science and technology. The Government have focused attention on that issue through the requirement to publish details of research and development policies in company reports and through our annual reviews of science and technology. We must not try to second-guess industry. The fundamental principle must be that the customer is king, but we need to ask ourselves how well focused are the arrangements in industry for acting as an intelligent customer and investor in science and technology.

This has been a valuable and interesting debate. Everybody who has been here will recognise that. More than that, it has been a timely debate. My right hon. Friend and I have listened to it carefully and I can assure the House that we will draw ideas and inspiration from it.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

10 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will acquit me of in any way being disappointed not to be called. I thoroughly enjoyed the contributions of my colleagues on both sides of the House and I had not asked or wished to be called. I raise a serious point of order about what happened earlier today. I am not criticising your judgment; it is a basic question of precedents.

I have consulted my records of 25 years ago when I was Parliamentary Private Secretary to the then Leader of the House, R.H.S. Crossman. On several occasions he was clearly told, "The Speaker won't wear it. No, you cannot have a statement today." That was a Speaker's judgment. I vividly remember an earlier occasion when the same man

was Minister of Housing and was backed by the late Dame Evelyn Sharp, but they could not get a statement on rent rebates because Mr. Speaker King would not have it.

My point of order is this: has the relationship between the Speaker and the Leader of the House as representative of the Government changed? Is it not finally up to the judgment of the Speaker whether to accept a statement, whoever asks for it, just as for a private notice question? Today was deeply unsatisfactory in the sense that some of my colleagues had their speeches curtailed because there was a statement on transport in London. I do not doubt that the statement was important, but it could have been taken on another day of the week. Have things changed for Thursdays? Has the balance between the Speaker and the Leader of the House changed in any way? Have custom and convention changed?

The learned Clerks will find in their records that the late Sir Barnett Cocks certainly made it clear on behalf of the Speaker to the Leader of the House that the Speaker was not having extra statements on Thursdays. Some of us think that the House of Commons elected a Speaker to have the final say on these matters——

Madam Speaker: Order. That is a very long point of order, and I have already dealt with it today. The Speaker's relationship with the Leader of the House is a good one.

Mr. Dalyell: You are the boss.

Madame Speaker: I am indeed the boss. The hon. Gentleman must know that the Speaker has no authority to determine whether statements are made; the Speaker is told that the Government wish to make a statement and it is the Speaker's duty to hear that statement. I have no doubt that the Members who asked questions on the statement on transport in London were grateful to be able to do so. As I have already explained to the hon. Gentleman, during the past two Sessions of Parliament more than 30 statements have been made on Thursdays when we have business questions. I am sure that he realises that the Speaker exercises discretion over how long business questions last. Each Thursday I go into the matter thoroughly. It is my duty to ensure that Back Benchers can question Ministers. I did that today, as I have done every Thursday and will continue to do while I hold the office of Speaker.

PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Ordered,

That this House approves the First Report from the Information Committee, Session 1991-92, in respect of the Parliamentary Office of Science and Techology (House of Commons Paper No. 325 of 1991-92).—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

North Down and Ards Community Unit

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

10.4 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I count myself extremely fortunate that I have been successful in obtaining this Adjournment debate. I am fighting to save the national health service as we know it in North Down. That is the essence of my fight. The Eastern health and social services board, with contemptuous regularity, has imposed drastic cuts on health and social services, in particular on the North Down and Ards unit.

About two weeks ago I made a speech in the House in which I attacked, with all the fervour that I could command, the latest cuts and hospital bed closures in North Down. In that speech, I accused the board of having already decided to close Bangor hospital in my constituency in due course. I then maintained that the bed closures at Bangor hospital, and particularly the closure of the entire surgical ward, were cunningly calculated by the board to provide it with an excuse for the closure of the only hospital we have in Bangor.

Today, I heard from the media that at a meeting to be held some time today the board would decide to close a number of hospitals in its area, within the next 10 years, including Bangor and Ards hospitals. Such a decision can only be described as scandalous, and it makes me extremely angry. It will certainly add to the waiting lists in other hospitals and the period of waiting will grow longer. The situation is already intolerable, and I have written on numerous occasions to complain about the delays that my constituents experience before obtaining a hospital appointment.

We need a hospital in Bangor, in particular a casualty department. Bangor and the surrounding areas have an immense and ever-growing population, and it is a disgrace that no casualty department exists. The board has dismissed my appeals for such a department and for a fully operational hospital in Bangor.

We will fight to save our hospital, but unfortunately people never think about hospital services until they need medical attention. It is then too late to complain. I therefore call on the people of North Down to mobilise in defence of a proper and decent national health service in North Down and Ards.

I have referred to the Eastern health and social services board for many years. Who are the members of that board? They are all appointed by the Minister—they are his minions. They have not been elected by the people and therefore have no loyalty to them. The board has deliberately set out to deceive the people. Sadly, the Ulster people have been robbed of much of their political power during the past 10 years or more. There is no Northern Ireland assembly where matters vital to the wellbeing of the community could be thrashed out and officials made to justify their decisisons.

We do not have a Select Committee on Northern Ireland. Despite all the demands made in the previous Parliament and in the House since the general election, the Government have flatly refused to establish one, but that would give political muscle to the Ulster people through the Members of Parliament who represent them. If we had such a Committee, which could cross-examine Ministers, officials and members of the Eastern health and social

[Mr. James Kilfedder]

services board, the board might not be so ready to take decisions detrimental to the health and welfare of my constituents and others. Therefore, I am exercising my fundamental right to pursue this vital matter on the Floor of the House and to attack the Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Security in Northern Ireland.

We do not even have in this House the Minister responsible for health in Ulster. He lurks in another place, where he seeks sanctuary. So I am denied the opportunity of criticising him face to face. Instead, I must direct my anger at the Minister who will reply to this debate and who is responsible for other equally important matters. I understand that he flew to Northern Ireland this morning for another, perhaps final, meeting of phase one of the talks.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Jeremy Hanley) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Kilfedder: I take it from the dissent being expressed by my hon. Friend that it was not the final meeting. I am glad to hear that. He then flew back for tonight's debate. I wish him well in his great task of seeking political progress. I have the utmost confidence in his ability.

I urge my hon. Friend to convey to his lordly ministerial colleague the sense of outrage felt by me and by the people who live in the North Down area. My hon. Friend is a man of compassion. Perhaps he can exert influence on the Minister responsible for health in Ulster and persuade him to defer all cuts and radical changes until such matters can be thoroughly discussed, either by an Ulster Select Committee or a new Northern Ireland assembly.

We have a plethora of documents claiming to protect the rights of citizens. They include the citizens charter and the patients charter, and recently the North Downs and Ards community unit launched its own charter for clients with the main aim of "Putting the Customer First". One official declared in a statement:

> "It is always important to involve the people in agreeing the services that ought to be provided."

That sounds magnificent and democratic, but it is a meaningless diatribe because the bureaucracy is interested only in itself. It is interested in the money, and the people and patients come a poor second.

The people have not been consulted by the board, certainly not about the applicationn for trust status for the North Down and Ards community unit or the hospital unit. There is only one guideline, and that is profit, which is alarming because the community trust would be handed control of all community health and personal social services in North Down and Ards. Those services include residential homes, day centres and residential units—such as Balligan, which is also unfairly facing closure—physiotherapists, chiropodists and mental health and handicapped services. It also includes services for the elderly and the provision of social workers and home helps, day centres, community nurses and residential homes.

I fear that the trust, once empowered, would close the Banks residential home, which I am fighting to keep open. Imagine what an independent unit not answerable to any democratically elected body would do to the services for the elderly, the young and the mentally handicapped and what the result would be for health and social services in general in the North Down area.

The proposed community trust constitutes a major departure from the situation in Great Britain, where only hospitals and health authorities have been invited by the Government to opt out of NHS control, with social services departments remaining in the English local authority structure. It seems that Northern Ireland, and North Down in particular, is being used as a guinea pig for the rest of the United Kingdom. What happens in North Down in the next few months will then be introduced in the remainder of the United Kingdom.

If the North Down and Ards community unit is given trust status, the highly paid board of directors will have operational independence from the NHS. The directors of the trust will have power to sell public assets, including residential homes, to generate income from private patients, to hire and fire and set new conditions of employment at will for all the staff, in particular the nurses, and power to make their own decisions, right or wrong, including the size of their own salaries. The Minister can tell me whether I am right or wrong, but I believe that the community trust would be expected to make a 6 per cent. return on its assets, and a revenue surplus. Such profit can be made only at the expense of client and patient services.

I thought that the national health service was meant to be for the benefit of the people, young and old, and that their welfare was the only deciding factor, but it has now become clear that self-governing trust status places profit before patients. Already, even before the North Down and Ards community trust unit has been formed, officials have been looking after the bureaucracy by pouring large amounts of money into new administrative posts while freezing posts involved with direct care. I should have thought that the opposite should happen. They should cut the number of officials in the bureaucracy and provide more money for the people who look after the elderly, the mentally handicapped and the young.

The North Down and Ards unit has a new headquarters staff of administrators—a team of officials attempting to put a price on the services to be provided for the community. Trust status will not benefit the public. The national health service will be fragmented, and different services will be provided in different areas. Client and patient needs will become subservient to financial considerations. Health services will be managed by officials whose concern will be profit and loss, not compassion and care. There will be no public accountability, and only minimal local representation on the trust board.

I fear that the proposed community trust unit will signal the end of public health and social services in the North Down and Ards area, and with it the end of compassionate and responsive services based solely on patient need.

I direct this appeal to the Government, especially to the Minister who will respond to the debate: to ensure that no irrevocable decision is made before all the issues can be exhaustively examined either by a Northern Ireland assembly—if one is created before the end of the year—or by a Northern Ireland Select Committee, which would have the opportunity to decide what is in the best interests of the people of North Down.

10.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): I congratulate the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) on being fortunate in the ballot for the Adjournment debate. The debate is on an important subject, but it also allows me to pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman personally. In the time during which I have served at the Northern Ireland Office I have known of no hon. Member more assiduous in serving his constituents. He has often visited me both at Stormont and at Westminster, serving the interests of the people for whom he has a special responsibility. I can say that without being patronising, not only because people know it to be true but because I feel that it is right that the hon. Gentleman should bring such matters to the Floor of the House, even though weighty events are taking place at Stormont, where we are considering some of the issues that he has raised today.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned a possible Northern Ireland Select Committee. That is very much a matter for the House authorities, but I hope that progress in the constitutional talks in Northern Ireland can return greater authority to the people of Northern Ireland—on the issue of health as well as on many other issues. There is great talent in Northern Ireland, which should be bearing the responsibilities to which the hon. Gentleman rightly referred. For reasons well known to the hon. Gentleman —I find it difficult not to call him my hon. Friend—our duty as a Government is to govern fairly. He may not always agree about Government policies, but I hope that he agrees that we adminster those policies fairly.

The Eastern health and social services board today published a consultative document on the future of hospital services in its district. It sets out the board's views on the changes needed in acute hospital services if patients are to continue to receive the best services that the latest technology and techniques can provide. My noble Friend Lord Arran is the Minister responsible for health and social services in Northern Ireland, and I know that he is taking a keen interest in this debate. For almost 18 months I had the honour of holding that post, so I also take a personal interest in the matter.

The board's document could be regarded as—I know that my hon. Friend the Minister believes that it is—a valuable contribution that will stimulate public debate, out of which will emerge firm proposals for change. Neither the board nor the Department of Health and Social Services proposes specific changes to particular hospitals. Such action will come later, probably next November when the board begins to firm up its purchasing intentions.

It is clear that with the remarkable and—I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees—welcome advances taking place in equipment, and medical and surgical techniques, particularly with the less invasive forms of surgery, patients spend considerably less time in hospital and can even be treated on a daily basis, which is for their convenience and happiness. I was once told by a surgeon that the majority of time a patient spends in hospital when undergoing surgery is used to heal the operation wound. Therefore, if the wound is smaller, the time spent in hospital will be less. That means that one can treat more patients in fewer beds as more patients can be treated in the available time.

The document of the Eastern health and social services board estimated that possibly up to 750 fewer beds would be needed over the next five years in its area. That will not, as the hon. Gentleman might fear, ruin the services provided to patients and prospective patients, but the reverse—hospitals will be able to take advantage of new techniques, but not waste money when it is not needed. We are running not a furniture warehouse, but a health service. We need to spend the money efficiently and wisely when serving patients.

The board usefully sets out in its consultative document a list of the standards and criteria that it expects hospitals to meet if they are to secure contracts in future. The document comments on the extent to which existing hospitals meet the standards. The consultative document stated that Ards hospital fell short of the standards required to ensure clinical effectivenss. It stated that Bangor hospital had not operated as an acute hospital for some time and it did not envisage it doing so in future.

The board has set out its thinking in relation to those two hospitals, and it is now for the local management unit and local community to respond and engage in a debate with the board. I take this debate as the first salvo in the consultative process. I assure the hon. Gentleman that he will always be free to consult my noble Friend the Minister, but I do not believe—and I know that my noble Friend does not believe—that now is the time to do so. It would be better to wait until after the board has decided before petitioning the Minister, who will listen.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about prospective trust status for the community services in his area. Government reforms in the health and personal social services in Northern Ireland are working extremely well. The process, which includes the new arrangement for the provision of community care from April, is directed at ensuring the continued provision of high-quality cost-effective health and social care for the population of the Province. Health and social service trusts form a key element of the service and will ensure a clear separation between the purchasing of services by the four health and social services boards and, as from April, some GP fundholders, and the provision of those services by the provider units. The trusts will remain firmly part of the health and personal social services. There is no question of opting out of privatisation.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about profits. There are no profits to be made by a health service trust. There may be surpluses or returns on capital, but those are merely extra funds for patient care. There are no dividends and no tax to be paid. It is purely a case of a business being run efficiently and being able to provide extra funds for the people for whom it exists. The trusts have freedom to manage. That will make separation from the purchaser more clear cut, but the timetable for the implementation of "Working for Patients", the document describing the Northern Ireland reforms, was a year behind the rest of the United Kingdom. That has provided a good opportunity for Northern Ireland to see some of the benefits already accruing from the separation of the purchaser and provider functions and especially from the establishment of GP fundholders and trusts in Great Britain.

Initially there were 59 trusts and in the second wave there were more than 100 applications. In Northern Ireland, there was only one application for trust status in the first wave. There have since been 10 more. I assure the hon. Gentleman that people do not apply for trust status merely because they think it is smart, a craze, the new thing to do. People who work in the health service are dedicated

[Mr. Jeremy Hanley]

and do not always earn the salaries that they could earn in other milieux. Applications for trust status should not be considered with despair, disdain or suspicion. People apply for trust status because they believe that it is a better way to provide services for patients.

As I have said, Lord Arran is responsible for this matter and he wants to continue the long reputation of the Province for high calibre health services. I mentioned earlier that the Department of Health and Social Services has received 10 more applications for trust status. They were from the eight units of management in the Eastern board, the Eastern ambulance service and the Craigavon area hospitals group, which is in the Southern health and social services board area. My noble Friend announced last week that those applications are to be the subject of a three-month public consultation exercise, during which everyone can express an opinion. Those taking part may include hon. Members, MEPs, councillors, trade unions, the hon. Gentleman and his constituents and statutory and voluntary health and personal social services organisations. I know from the Royal group of hospitals that such opinions are carefully considered. By 8 September my noble Friend will have a considerable body of opinion and after that decisions will be taken.

When we make decisions about applications for trust status—particularly that made by the North Down and Ards community unit, to which the hon. Gentleman referred—a number of elements will be considered. First, there will need to be a sound business plan. Business is not a dirty word. A potential health and social services trust must demonstrate that it will be financially viable, it has a clear understanding of how it intends to develop into the future, and how it intends to use the freedoms conferred by trust status. Secondly, management must be able to demonstrate the necessary skills and capacity to run the unit. In this connection, the Minister would want to see the involvement and commitment of senior professional staff. Thirdly and perhaps most significantly, I shall expect a potential candidate to be able to demonstrate that the establishment of a trust will result in tangible benefits for patients, clients and the community. It is important to remember that trust status is not an end in itself but, as I stressed earlier, the means of providing a better service to those who need our care.

At the very heart of our proposals is the conviction that health and social services units are best run locally by the professionals and managers who have first-hand knowledge of the service. This is another way of saying that those actually involved in caring for patients and clients usually know best what patients and clients need and are in the best position to meet those needs.

Our aim is to give those working in the service the freedom and support to use the skills which professional training and experience bring. The key, therefore, is greater delegation and our proposals for the health and personal social services as a whole should lead to greater freedom, flexibility and responsibility for all hospitals and units. The trusts will be both the ultimate expression of this greater delegation and, I hope, the spur to its achievement.

Units that are approved for trust status will have the maximum freedom possible to run their own affairs. Each will be run by its own board of directors, which will allow it to develop its own sense of identity and those associated with it will be able to share in the pride in the trust and in its achievements, as we have seen throughout Great Britain.

I say again to the hon. Gentleman, and I beg him to accept it, that the trusts are not opting out of the national health service, or the health and personal social services of Northern Ireland. They are opting for their future to be within those bodies, providing for the patients who want to continue to receive services free at the point of delivery. The unit will take pride in its identity and its belonging both to the health service and the people of Northern Ireland.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not believe that there is any ulterior motive in creating the trusts. I hope that he will see, as countless thousands have seen here in England, the benefits that trust status can bring. I hope that he will take note of the votes that we have had, and the polls that have been taken among those who work in hospital trusts in Great Britain—the nurses who would not go back and the doctors who would not now surrender the freedom to deliver their service better than they could in the past. I hope that he will not believe that we are there to protect beds when we should be there to protect patients, or that we are saving money because of cuts in Government expenditure. In fact, we do so in order to use the money better to serve the people for whom he and we have a special responsibility.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 12 June 1992

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Glassworks (Queenborough)

9.35 am

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I wish to present a petition from the Queenborough action group and residents of Queenborough and Rushenden on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent. The petition is led by Mr. Robert Eatwell and is signed by more than 800 residents of Queenborough and Rushenden. The matter is of great local importance, but it should also be of great concern to all hon. Members and the Government, and it has my support.

The petition relates to a major proposal that a redundant glassworks should be used for processing toxic waste. The petition reasonably urges that such a change requires a proper environmental impact assessment and planning authority. I support that approach, as does Swale borough council, the planning authority. The petition sheweth:

That whereas authorisation . . . given by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to VERT Ltd. prejudices the processes of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 by permitting VERT Ltd. to process toxic waste by vitrification in a redundant glassworks in the middle of the small town of Queenborough and whereas the planning authority Swale Borough Council consider that that change of use planning permission is required VERT Ltd. intend to proceed with their process in flagrant disregard of the health and safety of nearby residents and have failed to consider the environmental impact assessment required by the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will examine the procedures linking the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and demand that the Government take urgent action to protect the residents of Queenborough, Rushenden and surrounding districts from a considerable loss of amenity and a serious threat to their health. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc.

To lie upon the Table.

BILL PRESENTED

EUROPEAN UNION (PUBLIC INFORMATION) BILL

Mr. Nigel Spearing, supported by Mr. John Biffen, Mr. Peter Shore, Mr. Richard Body, Mr. Austin Mitchell and Mr. Richard Shepherd, presented a Bill to require the preparation and distribution of a statement summarising the provisions and implications of any Treaty on European Union, or any Treaty having similar effect, together with any principal associated Treaties, and the consequent changes in the rights and powers of the citizens and Parliament of the United Kingdom; and for connected purposes; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 19 June and to be printed. [Bill 32.]

Common Agricultural Policy

Relevant documents: European Community Documents Nos. 7570/91 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 13th November 1991 relating to reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and 5534/92 ADD 1 to 3 relating to the prices for agricultural products and related measures for 1992-93.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Madam Speaker: There is much interest in the subject of the debate, and I have no alternative but to impose a 10-minute limit on speeches between 11.30 and 1 pm.

9.37 am

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): The United Kingdom has always been the leading proponent of common agricultural policy reform and has always been clear about the principles on which that reform must be based. During the negotiations, I was pressed by the Labour party and by other commentators to convert these principles into a detailed blueprint covering every last facet of a reform policy—what many referred to as an alternative to the MacSharry plan. They suggested that if I did not produce such an alternative, MacSharry was bound to win. The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) said that, whether the Minister liked it or not, it was probable that MacSharry's notions would be accepted.

I always resisted this approach, not because I was unclear about what I wanted but because I knew that I would not get what I wanted by setting out a shopping list from the start. Negotiators do not tell those with whom they are negotiating their bottom line before they start. With the exception of the hon. Member for South Shields, the agreement has been widely welcomed. It is based on principles that, it was claimed, we could not uphold and which were spelt out last year in "Our Farming Future".

Let me remind the House what we said there. We said that efficiency was vital to a competitive agriculture, and that support policies must be geared to the needs of the real market. This agreement, by cutting prices and reducing the role of intervention, will bring farming nearer to the market and encourage farmers to pay much greater attention to the demands of the consumers. Moreover, we have been able to change many of the anti-competitive elements in the Commission's original proposals. Where quotas have been introduced, we have ensured that the new arrangements will be operated flexibly and without fossilising existing farm structures.

We insisted that the burdens of reform must be borne equitably across the whole Community. In particular, we insisted that reform must not be biased against larger, more efficient farmers. Again, we were successful. None of the Commission's discriminatory proposals has been carried through to the final agreement.

We insisted that the objectives of the CAP should be adjusted to give greater recognition to the importance of environmental protection and we have secured a Council declaration—an integral part of the final agreement—that clearly embodies this need.

We insisted that support for farming in the less-favoured areas must be maintained. The changes we secured to the beef premium arrangements and the defeat

[Mr. John Selwyn Gummer]

of the Commission's proposal for discriminatory new headage limits for the suckler cow and ewe premiums have guaranteed continuing support for farming in our hills and upland areas.

Above all, we said that any agreement must reduce the resource costs of agricultural support in the Community. This, too, we have achieved. Overall, the cost to the consumer and taxpayer will be lower under the reformed CAP. We now expect the burden imposed on consumers by the CAP, once the reforms have been fully implemented after three years, to be lower by some £8,000 million—£1·90 per week for every family in the Community. Of course, this is not to say that prices will immediately fall by this amount. The reductions will take place over a period, and during this time other elements in the final retail price of food will be changing. Nevertheless, the savings in resource costs are real—£8 billion from consumers' pockets that would otherwise have been spent on the CAP.

The Opposition cannot have it both ways. Last time we met, the hon. Member for South Shields argued that high support prices imposed massive costs on consumers. He then claimed that reducing those prices would have no effect on consumers. He cannot have it both ways. The fact is that £8,000 million which consumers would otherwise have directed to the CAP will not now be so contributed.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): This is the principal point of the proposal. Will the Minister assure us that the £8,000 million comes not just out of the pocket of food prices—that is what he, perhaps inadvertently, implied—but could also be a reduction in the actual amounts from budgets of national member states to the CAP? When does he think that the additional money that we will now have to pay to introduce the scheme will cease? At what date, or in roughly what range of time, will that £8,000 million less begin to take effect?

Mr. Gummer: It will begin to take effect from the start of the changes. The changes start differently, depending on the season. It takes rather longer for the arable changes to come into operation than it takes for livestock. The whole complete package will be finished in between three to four years, depending on the season. By the time that we come to the end of that process, we shall have implemented the reductions in price that work through in the £8,000 million. If the hon. Gentleman is patient, he will hear me go through the consequent effects. No doubt we can have a further discussion if he feels that I have not covered the points as he would like me to.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Given the drastic reduction in farming that has taken place in recent years, and the consequent loss of jobs for agricultural workers, how does the right hon. Gentleman see the significant reduction that he still believes these changes can achieve being reflected in farm incomes? How does he see the future of farming in that situation?

Mr. Gummer: If the hon. Gentleman is patient, he will see the other side of the coin. The £8,000 million reduction in the consumer spend is reflected nothing like as much, but the changes will be seen in the direct payments from the taxpayer to the farmer, which is precisely what the House is constantly demanding. It has constantly said that an awful lot of money in the CAP never gets to the farmer.

The hon. Gentleman and I have said the same thing again and again. We have always tried to ensure that there is a simple, direct method whereby we can support farming, ensure that the land is looked after and protect our food supply. That is what we have sought to change. If he will bear with me, I will go through that part of it. However, I start by making the clear statement that this is £8,000 million out of that which otherwise the consumer would have been contributing to the common agricultural policy.

These savings to consumers are a result of a significant change in the way that the CAP supports farmers—a shift away from support paid for by consumers to support paid for by taxpayers. In lieu of price support, we have direct payments to farmers. This is a sensible change when one moves from shortage to surplus. When one is in shortage, it is sensible to support pricing, because that draws more production through, which is what we wanted to do.

The CAP is a sensible policy, because it produced the food that we needed. The problem has been that, for some years, we have not been in that position. We need a system of support for agriculture in the countryside that does not increase production. The only way to do that is to move the mechanism of support from the consumer—the way that is bound to increase production—to the taxpayer, who is then able to direct the support to ensure that farm incomes are sufficient to keep farmers in the countryside, the countryside cared for and the food that we need produced, but not in such excessive quantities that the cost escalates beyond any kind of payment.

There is, inevitably and rightly, a change, and the cost to the taxpayer will increase, but by significantly less than the saving to the consumer. Overall, the cost of the CAP to consumers and taxpayers when put together will fall, and fall substantially. It will fall even if we assume that what we spend now under our existing policies would not have increased year by year as a cost to the taxpayer.

It is a major saving even if we say what no one here believes, that there would not have been an increase to the cost to the taxpayer under our present system. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for South Shields laughs to cover up the fact that he does not understand the system. He has done this for the past three years and will no doubt do it until he ceases to perform his role, as I imagine will no doubt happen this autumn.

Who actually believes that the experience of generations would have been reversed? Had we actually allowed high green prices to continue to generate surpluses, the cost to the taxpayers would have inevitably have risen sharply, with no offsetting savings to consumers. To return to the point made by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), those extra costs would not have gone to the farmer, because the mechanism then was that we would pay increasingly for storage and for selling surpluses off to countries that did not need them, and so would not accept them except at knockdown prices. All those things do not, except in part, give the farmer returns and support farmer income, which is what we are about.

Let me run through the key elements of what we agreed. More details are available in the briefing note that I have had placed in the Vote Office. Hon. Members should be aware, however, that it contains a clear note that it is the detail as far as we have it. Discussions are still continuing

—*[Interruption.]* It is amazing. Opposition Members know so little about the system that they think that what I have said is surprising.

We have agreed all the major principles. The United Kingdom wants to ensure that all the details of the enabling legislation shall be exactly right. It seems that Opposition Members do not remember that our consideration of legislation involves Second Reading, examination in Committee and on Report and Third Reading. In this instance, the main principles have been clearly enunciated. The detailed matters—for example, which year we shall use as the base year and exactly how measurements will be made—are being properly discussed at this moment. Opposition Members should know that and should not giggle to cover their ignorance.

Mr. Mark Robinson (Somerset and Frome): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if we were not having this debate, Opposition Members would be the first to complain?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is right. In fact, they have already complained. I have been asked on radio and television why we are having the debate today and not on some other day. Opposition Members try to have it in every possible way except the right one, which is to welcome what we have before us, what we have been asking for for a long time.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I wish to extract some information. We are discussing what is supposed to be a grand design, but I am sure that the Minister knows that I am concerned about three specific families who do not have a set-aside scheme and who will probably not get one. The families were producing dioxin-contaminated milk, and it is about a year since they were stopped from doing so.

Are there any proposals that, if implemented, will enable those three families to continue in production? At present, they are not allowed to produce because of atmospheric pollution and pollution as a result of the production of coalite and from other sources. How will these families be paid? I heard recently that an official from the Ministry told them that there is no more money.

I want to know whether there is anything in the proposals that we are discussing that will enable the three families to continue to farm. They should be paid in one form or another. What are the proposals?

Mr. Gummer: I think that the hon. Gentleman knows that the issue that he has raised has nothing to do with reform of the CAP. The farmers to whom he refers have been paid money over the past year while we have investigated the reasons for their problems. Their problems have not been caused by agriculture as a whole, by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food or by the Government. The farms have been polluted and I have stopped the farmers producing food that might be detrimental to public health.

I know of no hon. Member who would be quicker to demand my resignation if I had not protected the public good than the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). The hon. Gentleman has misused the opportunities that have been given to him to raise this matter by failing to say how much the Ministry has done for the families for the past three years. I met two of the farmers and went through their problems personally. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well what the situation is.

Central to the reforms are the changes to the cereals regime. Perhaps the basic mistake——

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gummer: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman, because it seems that he does not wish to be involved in these matters.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order.

Mr. Gummer: Central to the reforms are the changes to the cereals regime. Perhaps the basic mistake of the designers of the original CAP was to set cereal prices too high. It is understandable that they did so because there was a real fear of famine. In the longer term, however, changes to the regime should have been introduced much more rapidly. For the past 30 years, high cereal prices have encouraged over-production. Through the effect on feed costs, they have pushed up livestock prices, with the result that production has been encouraged and consumption depressed.

Moreover, the surpluses in cereals that this policy has produced have been dumped on world markets with the aid of high export subsidies. This has damaged the Community's relations with other cereals exporters and has added to the growing cost of the CAP while undermining the poorest producers in the third world.

I hope that we shall realise the importance of the change that is to be made for the third world. The mechanism that produced over-production at a time of surplus also produced subsidised production in Britain and the rest of Europe, the outturn of which was put on world markets. Producers in the poorest areas were unable to compete. I have seen Belgian rapeseed oil on sale in bazaars in Cameroon at a price which was cheaper than locally produced palm oil. That was a serious distortion, and it has been overcome as a result of the changed policy.

In the agreement that we reached last month, the Community has at last grasped the nettle. Over the next three years, from the 1993 harvest, cereal prices will be cut by 29 per cent. Indeed, if prices fall below the new target price to the intervention price, which they will do if the Community market remains in surplus, the reduction will be closer to 35 per cent. In other words, the mechanism means that, if the surpluses continue, the price itself significantly reduces further. There can be no doubt that reducing prices by about a third in only three years will have a major impact on the economics of cereal production, reducing the incentive to expand production.

I hope that we shall not underestimate the importance of the change or the difficulties that it presented to countries in the Community. Few hon. Members thought that we could make such a radical alteration. After all, Germany has departed from the principle of high grain prices, which was a constant of its agriculture policy since Bismarck. It has utterly changed what was its central agriculture policy throughout most of modern history. That shows how seriously these matters have been examined. The agreement marks a fundamental change in European agriculture policy, a change which was championed by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gummer: I shall continue. I want to answer a question that was asked by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed.

Mr. Barnes: It is on this point.

Mr. Gummer: As I have said, I want to respond to the question of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed.

As a result of the price cuts, every cereal producer will find his return from growing cereals reduced. To make up for this, producers will be offered a direct subsidy on an area basis, provided that they agree to set aside 15 per cent. of their arable land. I think that it is called combinable crop land, but for most of us arable land is the nearest phrase.

I must stress that the new arrangements differ fundamentally from our present and much more limited set-aside scheme. Under the new scheme, set-aside will become a normal feature of the production pattern on most cereal farms. It will have a much greater impact than our present piecemeal arrangements.

I know that many hon. Members dislike set-aside on principle. I acknowledge that it does have many disadvantages. Given time, there are much better ways of bringing supply and demand into better balance, but time is precisely what we do not have. With the current level of Community production, and the prospect of surpluses of, perhaps, 30 million tonnes after this year's harvest, only an effective Europewide set-aside can tackle overproduction rapidly enough.

There are moments when the best is the enemy of the good, and that is true here. A longer-term system that was better prepared over many years is the answer that we would have liked. That we failed to achieve years ago. Now we have an answer that will work. Indeed, it is the only answer that can work in the time that it has to work.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The Minister has come to a critical aspect of the renegotiation. When will he be able to spell out the detailed conditions and administrative arrangements for set-aside that will be made for farmers? The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that they will be starting to harvest next month. If they are to change the entire pattern of their farming programme by the autumn, they will need to know the new conditions and arrangements very quickly.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Lady is right. I shall do what she says as rapidly as possible. When I say that, I am not being restrictive in any way. The farmers will have those things that are immediately possible under the regulations as they are written. We shall produce them as soon as we can, which means in the next day or two. The rest of the changes will come as quickly again, as they are decided. Discussions are still continuing.

We are trying to make it as simple as possible—which has always been our aim—consonant with everybody in Europe doing it in the same way. That is what we are trying to achieve and I promise the hon. Lady that I shall achieve it as quickly as is humanly possible.

Let there be no mistake: the measures that we are adopting will go a long way towards dealing with over-production. A 15 per cent. set-aside requirement does not mean a 15 per cent. fall in cereals production. Not all producers are subject to set-aside; those with only small areas of arable crops are exempt. There is bound to be some slippage, but it will be limited.

The 15 per cent. requirement assumes that farmers will rotate their set-aside land, which will make it impossible for them to set-aside only their worst land. If they do not choose rotational set-aside—and, at our insistence, they do not have to do so—they will have to set aside a higher percentage of their land. The exact percentage will be decided later, but the aim will be to ensure that both forms of set-aside have the same overall effect in production reduction.

Obviously, it would be unfair for a farmer to say that he will not rotate set-aside, resulting in a smaller cut in production, but with the same support from the Community. The new, non-rotational set-aside will be fully supported, but it will require of farmers a sufficient additional set-aside to ensure that the production effect is similar.

The House should not forget that the percentage set-aside for the Community is set by the Council. If set-aside proves less effective than expected in reducing production, the Council will be able to increase the percentage. The Commission has made it clear that, in its view, the set-aside percentage should be used in that way as a mechanism to regulate and stabilise production levels.

For all those reasons, I am confident that set-aside, together with the cuts in price, will make a significant contribution towards tackling over-production. Even so, I would not have agreed to the new system if it had not met our main objections to the Commission's original proposals.

First, in the original proposals—Labour Members said that we would have to give in to them—the Commission said that much of the land set aside by large producers should not be subject to compensation. Because farms in the United Kingdom are, on average, significantly larger than those elsewhere in the Community, that proposal would have discriminated massively against British farmers. Only 40 per cent. of set-aside would have been paid for, compared with 70 per cent. elsewhere in the Community.

When we debated the proposals in December, I made it clear that that was not acceptable and would be resisted. I am pleased to say that that resistance was successful and that all planned set-aside under the new system will be paid for at the full rate.

Secondly, the Commission's proposals required all set-aside to be rotational. That was not acceptable, because such a requirement would prevent us using set-aside in ways that would be of long-term benefit to the environment—a matter about which most in the House are concerned. In addition, rotational set-aside in itself would cause significant environmental problems, such as nitrate leaching.

As I have said, the agreement we reached will enable set-aside to be on a non-rotational basis. It would be for individual member states to set a management condition to set-aside in the light of national circumstances. We are determined to ensure that, in the United Kingdom, those take full account of environmental factors and that we take advantage of the environmental opportunities offered by set-aside.

The hon. Lady may be assured that, as soon as I am able to present our proposals, I shall do so. However, we must get it right when we set the conditions for the United

Kingdom—for Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales. Generalised conditions would not be appropriate, because, for example, the environmental problems in Spain are so different from those in France or Scotland.

Thirdly, the Commission proposed that each individual farm in the arable sector should be given an individual base area, which would have determined its eligibility for the new area aid and its set-aside obligation. That would have been phenomenally difficult to deal with administratively, and I was not prepared to have a Domesday book scenario. Such a system would also have been inflexible, because changing patterns of agriculture could not have been accommodated. I am pleased that we have managed to remove that proposal.

Although the new payments will not be made until next year, to qualify for them farmers will have to set aside land from this autumn. That gives farmers less notice than we would have liked, especially as the detailed rules for the new scheme have yet to be agreed. We are working urgently on that matter and we will be carefully consulting on the implementation of the new scheme in the United Kingdom, consonant with our ability to produce those results and details as quickly as possible.

I have described the new system for arable crops at some length; indeed, during our last debate it was suggested that I should do so. It is essential that the reforms are agreed, because they are basic to the whole of the remainder of agriculture. The reforms in the arable sector will have a major effect on the livestock sector. By cutting feed costs, the costs of production for pigs and poultry will be significantly reduced, which is bound to have a knock-on effect in other parts of the meat industry.

It was in recognition of that that we agreed to reduce the support price for beef by 15 per cent. over three years from 1993. However, because the benefits of lower feed prices will not be felt by those producing beef from grass, we also agreed a significant increase in the beef special premium and the suckler cow premium.

To ensure that the main benefit of the new premium levels goes mainly to grassland producers, they will be made subject to stocking limits. Payments will be made up to those limits, but any amounts beyond them will not receive premiums. In addition, producers who farm beef extensively will be able to claim an additional premium of £24 per head under both premium systems. Those provisions will benefit the environment, because they will help to ensure that the new higher rates of premium do not encourage over-grazing.

I am glad to tell the House that the Commission's original proposal to make payment of a suckler cow premium subject to a headage limit of 90 animals was not adopted. That was another of the proposals that would have hit the United Kingdom especially hard—and among its countries would have hit Scotland even harder. Again, we succeeded in securing its removal.

To ensure that expenditure under the new arrangements is kept under control, both types of premium have been made subject to overall ceilings. For the beef special premium, it will take the form of a cap on the number of claims that can be paid in a particular region. I hope that the hon. Member for Moray will not mind my using England as an example, on the basis of its being designated as one region. However, the same would be true for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland or any region upon which we decide.

The ceiling will be based on the number of claims paid out in that region in a previous year. We can choose the year—1990, 1991 or 1992. If the total number of claims does not exceed that figure, they will be paid in full. If they exceed it, the total amount is shared out in proportion and each claimant receives less. That is a much more flexible system than a quota system on the animals, as was originally proposed.

Individual producer quotas will be introduced for the suckler cow premium, which will be subject to the same flexible rules on quota transfers as we secured for the ewe premium, with which I will deal in a moment. Before I leave the subject of premiums, I should mention one further innovation. It will explain why I mentioned Scotland, not Northern Ireland, in connection with an earlier point.

An additional premium of almost £50 a head will be paid in member states where a high proportion of beef cattle are slaughtered in the autumn. I was able to gain a specific assurance that that new premium will be paid in Northern Ireland. That will be of considerable help to the Northern Ireland economy and will remove what would otherwise have been a discrimination between the north and the south.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I am sorry to ask a technical question, but it appears that politics has reached every nook and cranny of agriculture. Is it the view of my right hon. Friend and his team that increasing the beef premium scheme also increases the prospect of providing good-quality beef to the British housewife? Is he convinced that it is sensible to continue increasing that premium, which essentially encourages the production of beef from the dairy herd rather than from the specialised beef herd?

Mr. Gummer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his technical point. We reached every nook and cranny of agriculture long before it was a European concern, when we had our own system in this country. We did it even more extensively and widely. My hon. Friend cannot suggest that it has anything to do with Europe. The extra premium for the suckler cow herd is specifically designed to bring forward the best beef in the best circumstances, and in the most extensive grazing situation. My hon. Friend will find that the mix is much better than he fears, and it will achieve precisely what he wants.

The United Kingdom has always been deeply opposed to the intervention system for beef. The point that my hon. Friend made would have been true in that respect. It is a change for the worse in the Community sector. I have never been afraid to point to those aspects that could be improved. The intervention system is wasteful and inefficient, and ruins good beef to the benefit of neither the farmer nor the consumer. The Commission shied away from making proposals in that delicate area. It was left to the Council, led by the United Kingdom, to devise realistic measures to curb intervention.

The amount that can be bought into intervention each year will be limited. While the possibility of safety net intervention will still exist, it will become a genuine measure of last resort instead of the regular daily activity that in some countries becomes the basis of the whole production, producing for intervention. That will no longer be possible. The new beef arrangements move support away from the storage of beef to those who raise

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and finish beef cattle—particularly those most dependent on grass in areas such as the south-west. We have long argued for changes of that kind.

I am sure that the House recognises that, in all these proposals, the demands for CAP reform that we made year in, year out, have been secured. The more that the House examines the proposals, the more it will be seen that they are our solutions, increasingly implemented in our way within the Community.

For sheep, our principal priority was to defeat the Commission's discriminatory proposals on sheep headage limits. If they had been implemented, up to 15 per cent. of eligible animals in the United Kingdom would have been excluded from premium, against some 3 per cent. in the rest of the Community. The effect in remote areas could have been devastating—not least in Wales and Scotland, which are particularly dependent on sheep production. That is true also of Northumberland and the backbone of England, and of highlands everywhere. It is not only the producers themselves but the nature of the countryside that depends on the retention of the sheep in the hills. Again, we were successful and the existing arrangements will remain unchanged.

The Council agreed, however, to make the premium subject to individual producer quotas. The cost of the sheep regime has increased sharply in recent years and it was clear that something had to be done. The annual ewe premium is the single most important and costly element in the regime. We cannot ask for reductions in spending elsewhere if we are not prepared to accept restrictions on spending in areas that are particularly beneficial to the United Kingdom. Quotas will set an individual limit on the number of animals eligible for ewe premium in future and that should go a long way towards bringing the costs of the sheep regime under control.

From the outset of the negotiations, I was determined to accept quotas in that sector only if I was sure that they would provide sufficient flexibility for the industry to continue to develop and to adjust to the needs of the market. It is one thing to say that one does not want costs to escalate or over-production to result, but quite another to fossilise particular production in particular areas, in the particular circumstances of a particular year. The final agreement meets that condition.

Producers who transfer or sell their holdings will be able to transfer all their premium rights to their successors. A producer will also have the right to transfer a quota to another producer without also transferring the holding. However, where a quota is transferred without the holding, a proportion will be siphoned off to a national reserve to be allocated to new entrants and other priority producers. I was able to ensure also that the final agreement provides for quota leasing.

Although a flexible quota transfer system is essential, we must make sure that quotas are retained in marginal areas, where farmers have few alternatives to sheep. I was concerned that, if one asked as part of the environmental package that the sheep remained on the hills, one must not create a system so flexible that the areas in which one most wants sheep to live are denuded of them because the quotas are sold.

For that reason, I secured a provision enabling member states to stop the transfer of quotas away from sensitive areas particularly dependent on sheep production. It is clear also that the transfer of quotas by tenants has potential implications for others, including landlords. I therefore secured provision for problems in that regard to be addressed in the negotiations on detailed rules.

That is another example of the issues that we are working on now. They may provide a source of amusement for the Opposition, but they are essential to tenants and landlords in difficult areas. It is not surprising that Labour was not elected in those difficult areas.

We face a major task in implementing the new system and allocating quota to individual producers. We will of course consult the industry and other interested parties.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): Is the Minister saying that there will be transfers of sheep quota and that there will be a monetary value attached to quotas in areas other than those that he designates as sensitive? Is there any provision for quotas to be transferred across national boundaries? That is a narrow technical point, but it would be helpful if the Minister could answer it.

Mr. Gummer: None of the provisions allows for quotas to be transferred across national boundaries. I happen to believe that those changes would be very good, and that is how it should be across our whole quota system. That is my personal view, but so far it is not one which has commended itself. We will work on and I hope that one day we will have that kind of transfer.

Of course there is a value in quotas. It is ridiculous to suggest that there is not. A quota must be valuable to be able to receive a premium on an animal. There is no mystic way—this is the point about money: it is an index of value. It is only those who do not face up to the reality of what money really is, and when it ceases to be that, that things go wrong. A quota can be transferred, and in transferring it one gains a benefit. That benefit must have a price.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): If a person holds his land but sells the quota, what proportion will go back to the nation? Will the proportion be the same throughout the Community?

Mr. Gummer: That decision is for national Governments, and the proportion is between 1 and 15 per cent. We must have a percentage and it will be for us to decide. It will be an important decision. There are considerable arguments in both directions. Much as I want a new entrants scheme, young farmers, and all the rest of if, that is the most difficult thing in the world, because one ultimately has to choose between people and that is not an easy task. However much we might like something in principle, it may be difficult to achieve in practice.

Mr. MacSharry's milk proposals would have been particularly damaging to the United Kingdom. The dairy cow premium would have discriminated against larger and more efficient milk producers and quota cuts would have further reduced our ability to serve the domestic market. I hope that those who represent Welsh constituencies will remember that. Some in Wales argued that they could accept MacSharry's proposals, but the Welsh milk producer would not have enjoyed the benefit received by the average Irish milk producer. The Welsh producer's support would have been transferred from Wales to Ireland, which would have been discriminatory to a considerable extent. I believe that that is now accepted even by those who suggested otherwise before the election.

I am glad to report that we got rid of the dairy cow premium. There will be no cut in quota this year. We secured a cut in the butter price of less than we wanted, but the balance of the agreement is right—a cut in price rather than in quota.

Both in Britain and elsewhere in the Community, there is a great deal of anger about the fact that, whereas some member states have fulfilled their quota obligations, cutting production and paying fines for over-production, others have not. The different treatment that the Council has afforded to Spain and Italy shows the strength of that feeling. Spain would undoubtedly have been granted a higher quota in its accession negotiations if the correct figures for Spanish milk production had been known. We have agreed that, at present, Spanish milk production is some 1·3 million tonnes more than the quota allowed.

Spain is a net importer of milk, which means that it is not only producing but consuming that milk. Spain has agreed to cut its production by 800,000 tonnes. The Community has agreed to increase Spain's quota to cover the other 500,000 tonnes when that has been achieved. That will mean a net cut in milk production not only for Spain but for the Community as a whole because, as Spain is not self-sufficient even now, it will have to look elsewhere if it is to meet its demand for milk.

We are inclined to blame others and talk of others' failure to do what we would like them to do. I hope, therefore, that the House will recognise that an 800,000 tonne reduction represents a major commitment, and the Spanish will not get the quota increase until they have achieved that end.

We insisted that the implementation of future cuts in the milk quota should depend on the state of the market. I cannot now see any reason why there should be a further cut in quota in the next two years.

Italy also sought an increased quota, but the Italian case is utterly different. Although perfectly able to introduce quotas, and committed to do so since 1984, Italy offered no remotely acceptable proposal for a reduction in production. The Council therefore refused to accept the Italian case and is now looking to Italy to implement the quota rules on the same basis as the rest of the Community.

The package included a significant reform of the Community's arrangements for supporting tobacco. I know that many hon. Members feel that the Community has no business supporting tobacco production. I must say that I find that argument difficult to uphold. People say that we should not have tobacco production in Europe but should allow people to go on smoking and import the tobacco from elsewhere.

We would then have to spend money on keeping the families who used to produce tobacco where they are, as we cannot have them flooding into towns where there is no work for them. We must accept that, with 800,000 people on 200,000 holdings dependent on tobacco production to a greater or lesser extent, it is not feasible to end support for tobacco production.

There can be no doubt that the new system is a definite improvement on the current regime. Support for tobacco will be made subject to a global quota, which by 1994 will have fallen to 350,000 tonnes—100,000 tonnes below the level of production last year. Moreover, there will be a further review of the tobacco regime in 1996.

From the start of the negotiations, I insisted that environmental considerations must form an integral part of the final agrement. It was as a result of our pressure that the Council agreed a statement in the final compromise recognising that environmental protection requirements must be pursued as an integral part of the CAP and calling on the Commission to make early proposals to that end. The Commission has agreed to do that. Moreover, we have already made a start, as I said earlier, in prescribing the new arrangments for set-aside and the beef premium. But it is only a start. We must now ensure that the initiative is carried forward and we have made our own commitment clear in a United Kingdom declaration, recorded in the Council minutes, which emphasises the importance of applying environmental conditions to the various direct payments to farmers.

The agri-environment action plan—an ugly name for a helpful and useful scheme—which forms an important part of the final package will also be of great benefit to the environment; it will require all member states to operate programmes for environmentally sensitive farming. It will build on the success of our own environmentally sensitive area schemes and provide scope for further schemes, such as a scheme to encourage extensive livestock farming where it will be environmentally beneficial.

During the negotiations, we secured a number of important changes in the Commission's original proposals —the addition of provisions to encourage organic farming, to encourage farmers to manage their land for public access and to help to protect water quality. We also secured the removal of proposals that would have dislocated the ESA scheme. Member states now have a year in which to draw up plans to implement the new programme, and we shall consult widely in doing so.

I am sorry that I am taking so long, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but last time we debated the CAP, it was suggested that these important and detailed proposals should be explained as clearly as possible.

At the Council meeting, agreement was also reached on support prices for the 1992-93 marketing years. The Commission proposed—under Britain's guidance, because we pressed the matter in the first place—that prices generally remained unchanged pending decisions on CAP reform, although, for cereals, prices will be cut by 3 per cent. under the stabiliser mechanism agreed in 1988. For cereal farmers, the effect will be offset by the Council's decision to terminate the cereals co-responsibility levy, currently set at 5 per cent. of the intervention price, from the start of the 1992 marketing year.

Both the United Kingdom farming industry and the Government have long opposed the continuation of the levy: it is inequitable, discriminatory and unsatisfactory, increasing costs to farmers without decreasing prices paid by consumers. I am sure that the industry and the nation will welcome its disappearance. That is another example of the CAP's being made to conform with the model that Britain thinks right, in which the consumer is the driving force.

The agreement will not only affect the Community. The fact that it makes a settlement in GATT more attainable means that its effects are likely to be felt worldwide. I am therefore extremely disappointed that the United States has decided on action which, if taken, will be illegal under the GATT procedures.

The European Community changed its policies on oilseeds and produced an alternative that we thought would meet the GATT panel's requirement. The panel decided that it was not satisfactory, and the next stage

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should be negotiation. It is wholly unacceptable that the United States should move not to negotiation but to retaliation, and I hope that the United States Government will think better of a move which I fear has more to do with internal policies than with external concerns.

The agreement is remarkable—a reform that has fundamentally changed the nature of farm support. It met all our major objectives; it met the major concerns of farmers and their representatives; it benefited the consumer; it confounded our critics who said that this could not be done; it safeguarded the future of farming in the United Kingdom and in Europe as a whole.

At root, all this was made possible by the fact that, at the general election two months ago, the country elected to government a party which understands the countryside, knows how the countryside works, believes in and supports agriculture and recognises that it is the key to the future of the countryside and is prepared to fight for the interests of the United Kingdom.

It would have been a different story had the hon. Member for South Shields had the opportunity to apply his skimpy knowledge of the industry to the negotiations, which came to a head so soon after the election. We know why the negotiations were concluded within weeks of the election. It is not, of course, a party political matter—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh no."]—but I was interested to note that *Farming News* let the cat out of the bag. It said of the result of the reform:

"The Commission gambled on a change of Government in Britain to secure a deal closer to its original proposals."

The Commission thought that it would be dealing with the hon. Member for South Shields and it knew what that would mean: the hon. Gentleman would have let Mr. MacSharry have his way. Of course he would. Mr. MacSharry said that he was going to have his way, that there was no point in arguing it and that it would go through. The Labour party spokesman sold out in advance. He knows little about agriculture and cares less. He would have sold out the United Kingdom's interest.

I do not want to leave out the Liberal party. It would have supported Mr. MacSharry, as it always does. The Liberal spokesman at the time—I personally am sad that he is no longer with us, for he is a man with a real concern for agriculture—told us that all that was necessary was a bit of nuancing. I shall listen to what the Liberal spokesman says today about nuancing. In my view, it is a foreign word and a foreign concept, but it comes well from a federalist party.

I am not 100 per cent. sure what nuancing means, although it has a rolling feeling about it that worked extremely well at meetings throughout the country when we were preparing for the defeat of Liberal candidates from constituency to constituency. I have a very good idea, though, what it means. I am sure that, if we had it, we should not like it and that we should now be regretting it.

So goodbye to nuancing. We shall look forward to another new Liberal party policy on agriculture. It is at least an annual event; it may now become a six-monthly event. We shall watch, for we have one or two seats to win back and one or two seats to win. I am looking at the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, because he is top of my list.

This is a solid agreement, won by hard negotiation in the Community, in which the voice of the United Kingdom is increasingly heard and respected. It is an agreement which shows that the European Community, with its disparate systems of agriculture, different sizes of farms and contrasting rural histories, works. It shows that a solid agreement can be brought about for the benefit of the United Kingdom with a majority voting system.

Together we have reformed Europe's common agricultural policy, to the benefit of the people of Europe—farmers, consumers and taxpayers. It is an agreement for Europe, in Europe and by Europe. It is an agreement which I wholeheartedly commend to the House.

10.32 am

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I am tempted to say that it is the way the Minister tells 'em, but perhaps I should not.

I begin by protesting about the fact that we are having this debate on a Friday. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Hon. Members may say, "Oh," but the Opposition happen to think that agriculture is very important. There are those who believe that arguably this is the most important agriculture debate since 1947. The Minister knows that we are right. Important Government debates are never held on a Friday, except in an emergency. The fact that the Government are holding this debate today shows that they have little interest in the consumer. Now that the votes have been gathered in after the election, they have little interest in the farmer, either.

Mr. Gummer: Can the hon. Gentleman explain his interest in the consumer when there are only seven Members of his party on the Opposition Benches, whereas large numbers of my hon. Friends care enough about the consumer to have come here for this debate? Just because Labour Members have been too lazy to turn up seems to me a curious reason for attacking us.

Dr. Clark: Hon. Members in all parts of the House have made it known to me that they would have liked to take part in the debate, but many of them have constituency engagements that they have been unable to cancel. It was underhand of the Minister to make that point. Usually there are more Labour Members than Conservative Members present for debates on agriculture.

Another reason why we should not be holding the debate today is that the information that is needed by the farming community and by all hon. Members is not available. All that we have had from the Minister is the headline stuff. Even the National Farmers Union, not exactly a friend or supporter of the Labour party, shares our view. It says:

"Key details within the agreement's framework have yet to be decided."

We simply do not have the information. Even the Ministry's memorandum says that the debate must take place against a background that is based

"on our latest understanding of what was agreed."

The Minister does not know what was agreed.

Mr. Gummer: Oh!

Dr. Clark: The Minister says "Oh!" I refer him to his own document which he laid before the House. It says that it is based

"on our latest understanding of what was agreed."

Does the Minister not know what has been agreed? If he does, why did he not tell the House? Is he trying to keep information from the House? I suspect that he is, a point to which I shall return in a moment.

The farming community, Members of Parliament, journalists and the Minister do not know what the right hon. Gentleman has agreed. Therefore, we can legitimately ask, why the haste for this debate? The answer is that the Minister realises that, far from this agreement being the triumph that he tried to portray in the House on 22 May, it is a rather unpalatable dish. It will introduce a farming regime that will be unpopular and, more importantly, will not work. The regime will provide little benefit for the consumer but will cost the poor old British taxpayer even more than the extortionate amount that he already pays to support an inefficient agriculture regime.

Any independent observer will realise that we are holding this debate on a Friday because the Government have entered into a damage-limitation exercise. They are trying to sneak this agreement through at a time when there will be no publicity about it and the full horrors of it will not be realised. Perhaps the Minister was hoping that the European Community's Court of Auditors' opinion on CAP reform would not be widely available, but when we look at it we realise that the Court of Auditors is sceptical about the effect of CAP reform. It says:

"There is an urgent need to review the cost effectiveness"

of the scheme. It talks about the weaknesses of financial management being

"apparent at all stages of the evolution of measures, from initial conception to implementation."

The Court of Auditors then says:

"It is not surprising . . . that the economic cost of measures in relation to their stated objectives in some cases borders on the absurd."

Mr. Mark Robinson: If these proposals are as disastrous as the hon. Gentleman tells us they are, why have the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners Association produced two of the most supportive briefs for them that I have ever seen, either when I was last a Member of Parliament or now?

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. *[Laughter.]* Yes, absolutely. The interesting point is that the hon. Gentleman is talking about headlines, not about the detail. The CLA's press release says:

"One and a half cheers for the . . . agreement."

That is not exactly fulsome praise for the agreement. I have the press release here. Perhaps I can read out a little more of it to the hon. Gentleman, as it just makes the point.

It says:

"One and half cheers for the CAP reform agreement."

It congratulates the Government not on the agreement but on removing some of its discriminatory effects. It is almost as if they had lost a football match six-nil and had said, "It could have been 12-nil."

Mr. Robinson *rose*——

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding) *rose*——

Dr. Clark: Perhaps I should give way again to the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Robinson).

Mr. Robinson: The document says:

"The CLA congratulates the Government and Mr. Gummer in particular for removing these discriminatory proposals."

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman should listen: that is exactly what I said. I give way now to the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies).

Mr. Quentin Davies: I intended to draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the same point. The first page of the CLA's comments on the reforms

"congratulates the Government and Mr. Gummer in particular."

What could be clearer than that?

Dr. Clark: It congratulates the Government on removing the discriminatory effects. That is the point that I have been making. It is headline stuff, but the details do not bear out the allegations of Conservative Members.

Labour believes that the Government are obsessed by secrecy on this issue, just as they were about BSE, Chernobyl and every other issue with which they have dealt. The Minister seems to run the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food like a secret society that would make the freemasons seem open. In every case, the Government try to hide information from the public, as they have done on this occasion.

Labour has argued that the CAP is nonsense. It accounts for almost 60 per cent. of the EC's budget, which means that the poor old taxpayer pays money to support farmers, which in turn results in his paying more for food than if he had not paid the subsidy in the first place. It is a ridiculous system. Nothing in the reform, or so-called reform, proposals goes to the heart of the matter.

The Government blithely urge the House to support the reform package, which will increase taxes and keep food prices high. The Minister did not mention that when he talked about the reform plans. The reform was not voluntary but was forced on the EC. It came about because of two pressures—one internal and one external. The internal pressure was simply that the cost of the CAP was unsustainable. Since 1975, it has risen in real terms by 250 per cent. Since the Minister has presided over agriculture and food issues, it has increased by more than 55 per cent. Ironically, farmers claim that their incomes have not increased. There is something rather strange here. Nothing in the agreement will alter that balance. Farmers have a genuine case; their incomes genuinely appear to be falling. They are becoming increasingly dependent on state handouts.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): Rubbish.

Dr. Clark: Let me tell the hon. Gentleman that 49 per cent. of the income of European farmers comes from subsidies. The amounts are very high indeed. Even poorer farmers who have hard lives in upland areas often receive vast subsidies. I was looking at the accounts of an upland sheep farmer in Scotland who received £43,000 in subsidies in 1990-91. Large amounts of money are going from the public purse to support farmers.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Does the hon. Gentleman agree with the new proposals for set-aside? Previously money would have gone into over-production, which would have to be stored, rather than directly to farmers. Under the new set-aside proposals, the money will go to farmers and, we hope, in an environmentally sensitive way.

Dr. Clark: I shall try to encompass the hon. Gentleman's important and valid point, which is the key to the reform package, when I deal with set-aside.

Mr. Gummer: If farmers' incomes are low, they can be increased only by the housewife paying more for her food or by the Government paying them more directly from the taxpayer. As the hon. Gentleman says that taxes should not increase, does he think that food prices should increase? If he does not want food prices to increase, should we take more from the taxpayer? He must tell farmers what he believes. He is trying to promise lower prices and lower taxes to get the votes of the housewives and farmers.

Dr. Clark: We have made it plain where we stand. We believe that proper environmental management agreements should be made with farmers, which obviously will be funded by taxes, but no extra money will be spent on agriculture because, under the present ludicrous system, for every £3 that is spent on agricultural support only £1 goes to the farmer. The Minister agreed with that earlier today. *[Interruption.]* If I may continue, I shall show that the Government have not corrected that in this package.

The cost of the CAP is incredible. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the independent international expert, estimates that the average household of four in the United Kingdom pays £18·80p a week towards the cost of agricultural support, which is indefensible. Under the new agreement—the new deal that the Minister so heralds—the cost to the taxpayer will increase by roughly £1 a week. That, again, is quite indefensible. We want a better mechanism for supporting agriculture instead of trying to patch up and play around with the present regime under which the CAP operates. That is our main grumble about the Minister's claims for the reform.

The Minister's second point was the pressure to change from GATT. We believe that GATT is vital because most European countries depend very heavily on world trade. In industrial matters, Europe could not withstand a world trade war. Germany exports roughly 31 per cent. of its GNP. The figure for Britain is 24 per cent. and for France 23 per cent. If we consider our main competitors, Japan exports only 11 per cent. of its GNP and the United States a mere 9 per cent. Those countries could withstand a world trade war; we could not. That is why we must have liberalisation of world trade. I hope that the changes that have been made will at least satisfy the GATT negotiators and that we will reach a settlement. That is quite important.

I understand Conservative Members being euphoric about the agreement, because they have seen what appeared in the papers and the headlines. They saw the Prime Minister's endorsement of it as a personal triumph for the Minister, but the details do not bear that out. They saw the response of bodies which should have known better, such as the National Consumer Council, which at one time spoke independently for the consumer but now seems to be dependent on MAFF press handouts. They have not been able to read much of the detail because, as the Minister conceded, it is not available. At the time, I did not share their euphoria. I acknowledged that an improvement had been made to the CAP, but nothing which merited such blazing headlines. Labour is justified by history for being cautious in our welcome. We have been through all this before.

In 1984, the Conservative Minister at the time announced the introduction of milk quotas. We were told that that was the way forward and the ultimate solution. Of course, it was nothing of the sort. Instead of solving the problems of overproduction, they continued with intervention stores bulging with dairy produce—more than 300,000 tonnes of skimmed milk powder and 200,000 of butter rotting. Quotas did not work, although Conservative Ministers assured us that they would.

In retrospect, it is clear what a daft deal it was for Britain because it discriminated directly against Britain. What Minister in his right mind would negotiate the right for the country in Europe which is among the most suited for dairy production to be limited to a little over 80 per cent. self-sufficiency? What Minister would agree that a country such as Britain which can produce all its own dairy produce—we concede that we cannot produce citrus fruits—must import almost 20 per cent. of its dairy requirements? Quotas did not work.

The Minister referred to the Italians, against whom there is rightful anger. It is all very well for the Minister to huff and puff at the Dispatch Box, but what is he going to do? It is disgraceful that the Italians have not introduced milk quotas and outrageous that they are asking for even more. I understand that they are to ask for still more. British farmers have the right to ask the Minister when he will fight for them. Why should British dairy farmers be penalised for playing by the rules if others do not even try to adopt them? I agree that the Italians do not play the game, but why does the Minister not do something about it?

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): During his remarks about the level of dairy production, the hon. Gentleman railed against the inability of our dairy producers to produce up to national sufficiency—or at least that was the implication. We are net sheepmeat exporters, so is he prepared to set aside the surplus sheepmeat production to rectify the balance or is he prepared to argue for a continuation of our ability to export sheepmeat?

Dr. Clark: We have long argued that it is in the long-term interests of farmers in Britain, who we believe are among the most efficient in Europe, for them to get much more—indeed, eventually almost all their income—from the market and that there should be no restriction of quotas. That is the way forward. The way to support the needy farmers in difficult parts of the country is through management agreements based on environmental controls. That strikes us as the best way to avoid the difficulties and it will end up with countries such as Britain, which are well equipped for dairying and some sheep farming, being able to concentrate on the activities that they do best.

Mr. Gummer: Will the hon. Gentleman answer the question? In advocating self-sufficiency in dairy products, is he supporting the French farmers who say that they should not have to import British lamb? Self-sufficiency in those terms is not a sensible concept in a Community with a single market. It cannot be so, and his party specifically says that it is not.

Dr. Clark: The Minister misunderstands the question. We are talking not about self-sufficiency but about the fact that if one can effectively and efficiently produce the goods that the consumer wants, one should win the markets. If one cannot, one has no right to those markets. It is not a question of self-sufficiency within individual nations—we are talking about freer trade. We happen to believe that

British farmers would do very well because they are able to compete in free trade. The fact that the Minister keeps rigging the market against them makes it very difficult for them to do so. However, I must move on.

In 1988, we had the next episode. I well remember the Prime Minister returning from Brussels, saying that we had solved the CAP problem. We were told that we had stabilisers and set-aside, that cereals were to be the targeted regime, and that the problems would go away. That was against a background of cereal interventions of 6·7 million tonnes. We were told that that problem was to be solved, but it has been made worse. There is now not 6 million tonnes but 20 million tonnes in intervention and, as the Minister acknowledged, there will be 30 million tonnes by the end of this harvest. Conservative Ministers twice said that they had the answers, but they were wrong. We told them so at the time and we have been proved right, so we can stand by the old maxim, "Twice bitten, twice shy." That is not a bad line to take.

I concede that there have been changes. I accept that there will be a 29 per cent. reduction in cereal prices, which will have some effect, and the 15 per cent. reduction in beef prices should be beneficial, but is the new initiative a true reform? We have our doubts. We doubt that it will stand the test of time. We regard it purely as a short-term, transitional measure, and we still await a proper reform of the CAP. If the initiative could be seen as only the first step in such a reform, it would be welcome. However, to judge from the manner in which it has been presented today by the Minister and in which it has been hyped, it seems that it is regarded as the end of the reform process, not the beginning.

Mr. Barnes: Is not it strange that, although British politics is being dominated by consideration of the Maastricht agreement and its consequences and that there will be huge alterations to the treaty of Rome because of Maastricht, not one word of the section on agriculture is to be altered? Does not that show that the changes we are now discussing are very marginal?

Dr. Clark: My hon. Friend makes a valid point which endorses the theme that I am trying to develop.

Let me take it a stage further. The Minister has not spelt out to the taxpayer how much the deal will cost. My charge is that it will not stand the test of time. In spite of what the Minister says, it is basically the MacSharry blueprint. It is open-ended to get more compensation for British farmers, which means that the cost of the scheme will go up even more. However, MacSharry said that the cost of the CAP will continue to increase for about five to eight years.

Initially, the cost appears to be about £3 billion extra a year, which means an extra £1 a week in taxes for the average household of four. MacSharry and the Commission justify the increase by saying that it is for a short time only and that it should then decline. Our concern is that what goes up very rarely comes down. We do not believe that the reforms will last five years, so it will be money down the drain. What confirms us in our view of ever-escalating support prices is that the compensation payments are open-ended. The amount we pay for the set-aside is on-going. Therefore, the poor consumer and taxpayer will continue to foot the bill.

The Minister made great play of benefits to the consumer, but when we asked in parliamentary questions whether there would be reductions in prices, the Minister was rightly and openly coy. Ministers are hedging their bets because they know that, although in theory there should be reductions in prices, there will not be and, indeed, under these proposals the cost of food to the consumer is likely to rise.

The proposals are a bureaucratic nightmare. They will increase the cost of the CAP bureaucracy, of monitoring by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the bureaucratic cost for the producer. There will be many more forms to fill in, with the result that the cost will have to be passed on to the consumer. The end result is that the ordinary man and woman in this country will receive no benefit from the deal. There will be increased taxes and increased food prices. The Minister should have no pride in his renegotiations.

I promised that I would return to the issue of set-aside because it is the key to the whole so-called reform package. We have consistently opposed the concept of set-aside for many reasons. The British scheme has failed to make any significant dent in cereal production. The Minister's document shows that since 1985, although the area devoted to set-aside in the United Kingdom has declined by 385,000 hectares, cereal production has increased by 1·7 million tonnes. Set-aside simply has not worked in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nigel Evans: In "Rural Socialism", which is not a magazine that I normally read, you are quoted as saying —[HON. MEMBERS: "No—the hon. Gentleman."]—Dr. Clark says

"the present system of set-aside . . . is difficult to oppose because it is actually cost-effective"

That is what you said in the December—January edition——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hesitate to intervene as the hon. Gentleman is new to the House, but the word "you" refers to the Chair. He must refer to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Evans: I am sorry. The hon. Gentleman stated in 1989-90 that he believed that the set-aside scheme then in operation was cost effective. Are we witnessing another famous U-turn from the hon. Gentleman?

Dr. Clark: I am surprised to hear that quote, and I am sure that hon. Members will be surprised to hear it, because I never said it.

Mr. Evans: I have it here.

Dr. Clark: Yes, but quotes are not always correct. Hon. Members know that I have consistently opposed the scheme.

Set-aside has two difficulties: first, it does not work and, secondly, it is open to abuse. In this country we have a good monitoring system and good agricultural administration, but there have been abuses here and we managed to catch some of the abusers. The Minister has had to recover set-aside payments worth £0·25 million in recent years. If there is abuse in this country, we suggest that abuses will be even greater in countries which do not have such an efficient agricultural administrative structure.

The main charge against set-aside is that it will not work. The Minister has conceded that farmers set aside marginal, less accessible land if there is no rotation set-aside scheme. As a result, they increase their income and increase production on the rest of their land. He has tried a hybrid system—partly the old scheme topped up

[Dr. Clark]

with a rotational system, and partly a straightforward rotational system. The weakness of both systems is that they offer no environmental benefits. In this country farmers receive set-aside payments for building golf courses and riding stables, so the scheme has not helped the environment.

Our main charge is that rotational set-aside will result in increased cereal production. Increased productivity will ensure that. The decision to allow set-aside land to be rotational will ensure that that happens because the 85 per cent. of land not set aside will become more productive —that is long-established good husbandry. Experience in the United States supports that theory. As farmers concentrate management and physical resources on a smaller area, productivity increases. In addition, predicted increases in productivity of 4 per cent. a year for wheat would eliminate the theoretical 15 per cent. reduction in production through set-aside in three years.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Does the hon. Gentleman concede that logically, if agricultural productivity increases by 4 per cent., it will do so anyway, irrespective of whether there is an element of compulsory set-aside? It therefore follows that we are reducing production which would otherwise have increased by a greater amount. We are still reducing potential production by enforcing a 15 per cent. set-aside.

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman's logic is impeccable, but we argue that that is not the way to tackle surplus cereal production and that it should be more dependent on the market. Perhaps I can spell out my argument more graphically by quoting an honest straightforward arable farmer, Oliver Walston—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh no!"] Hon. Members may not like it because he is a successful farmer. Writing in *Farmers Weekly* on 5 April, he explained the strategy that he will adopt on his Cambridgeshire farm. He was honest enough to put his intentions on paper, and other farmers will do the same. He said:

"this autumn I shall obey the letter of the law and do what Brussels wants. I shall leave 120 ha untouched. That means I shall plant 120 ha less than I had planned of peas and spring rape, but my wheat acreage will remain just the same as usual. For the 1994 harvest, however, my wheat will have the benefit of this fallow land and I expect the yields to rise accordingly . . . My output of peas and rapeseed will certainly fall. But my output of wheat will remain static next year and will actually increase in 1994."

He graphically illustrates the point that the Labour party is arguing and makes it understandable. I do not need to say any more.

The key pillar of the Minister's strategy to reduce cereal production by set-aside will not work. Farmers will be able to participate in the new scheme without taking wheat or barley out of production.

I have not had time to deal with the details of the package, but they are as flawed as its strategic aspects. A highly complex set of bureaucratic controls will result and will make life difficult for hard-pressed sheep and beef farmers. There will be more forms to fill in, more paperwork and less farming. I am worried about the notion of quotas for hill sheep farms. We wait to find out what the Minister regards as sensitive areas. From now on it will be even more difficult for young people to enter farming because they will have to buy quotas as well as having to buy land. Young people have been able to buy hill farms because the land is cheaper and they have not had to buy as much expensive capital equipment. The scheme will make life more difficult for upland farmers.

The scheme will not help the environment, but will lead to increased production. The Minister and his colleagues have ducked the fundamental issues. Why did he not take on the European Community in its own jargon? Why did he not argue the position of subsidiarity? Even the Foreign Secretary said earlier this week

"that Britain wanted a Europe wider in membership and more decentralising in operation than at the moment."—[*Official Report*, 8 June 1992; Vol. 209, c. 34.]

Is the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food immune from such an approach?

More decisions on agriculture should be taken at national and regional level. Countries should be freer to decide how best to use their resources, especially natural resources, such as agriculture, which are dependent on climate and topography. We concede that agriculture should operate within a European framework, but on a looser basis of goods freely traded within the Community. That would make more sense to the consumer, to the taxpayer and to the future of Europe, if the Community is to be made up of a wider Europe, including Scandinavian and eastern European countries. The deal goes against that trend. Reform of the CAP will lead to a more interventionist, bureaucratic and complicated system of agricultural support.

It is, therefore, hard to see the agreement as a significant step towards the reform of the CAP. I can do no better than to conclude my case by quoting the Country Landowners Association, which has been held up as the epitome of what is correct. At the end of its press release, the association says:

"All in all there is little in this so called 'reform package' that can truly be called reform in any rational sense. Quotas and other market management measures are a step backwards towards an artificially rigged market. And the cost of compensation seems unlikely to be sustainable in the longer term."

That case is, in essence, Labour's case.

11.9 am

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I am most grateful for this opportunity to contribute early in the debate. In so doing, I proffer my apologies to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the House. As I have a pressing engagement in my constituency, I may not be present for the winding-up speeches. Unlike Opposition Members—there are now only three Back-Bench Opposition Members and two Front-Bench Opposition Members present—some of us are keen to contribute to debates on agriculture. When such debates are flagged, we make arrangements to cancel meetings in our constituencies, important as they may be, because we believe that contributing to these debates in our constituents' interests takes precedence over everything else.

I will address my remarks to the impact of the CAP reforms on the arable farming sector in my constituency, so I will concentrate on the cereal side rather than on the other sectors. I ask the House to consider my remarks in the context of farming in the fens of north-east Cambridgeshire. Given a free market in agriculture, there is no doubt that my farmers would be the most competitive, the most efficient and the most productive in

the United Kingdom, if not in Europe as a whole, because of their singular advantages of soil, climate, terrain and opportunities for irrigation.

Let us consider my right hon. Friend's achievements from his very successful negotiations in the latest round. This has been a major triumph for my right hon. Friend because, for the first time, the emphasis has been shifted away from financing a surplus of agricultural products to ensuring that any subsidy payment is directed to the farmers themselves as income to their bank accounts. The new arrangements remove the discrimination against the British farmer, especially the larger arable farmers of East Anglia, which was inherent in the original MacSharry proposals. They will also remove soon the unfair and iniquitous co-responsibility allowance and my farmers especially welcome that negotiating success.

We are told that the cost of the reformed CAP will be kept within the agricultural guidelines. All my constituents welcome that change which my right hon. Friend has negotiated. However, I point out to my right hon. Friend that it may be the biggest test he will have in future years.

The price reductions which have been negotiated will benefit consumers and should enable the negotiations on the general agreement on tariffs and trade to progress to a successful conclusion. The place of environmental protection within the CAP has been strengthened. That has been a primary plank of my right hon. Friend's negotiating position, and the House and the country congratulate him on that.

Those achievements have been recognised by many involved in agriculture, and reference has already been made to the comments of the National Farmers Union. To reinforce the point, I quote the NFU, which said:

"The NFU has welcomed the achievement of British Ministers in obtaining the removal of the main discriminatory elements in the EC's original proposals".

The Country Landowners Association

"congratulates the Government and Mr. Gummer in particular for removing these discriminatory proposals."

The CLA president, the Hon. John Fellowes, a well-known and much respected Cambridgeshire farmer, said the other day:

"The discrimination against efficient UK farming in the original proposals for arable set aside has been removed, and John Gummer is to be applauded for being so resolute on this major point. We are also pleased to see the replacement of the discriminatory dairy cow premium with price based measures in the milk sector."

To my ears and those of my constituents, that sounds like a ringing endorsement. What more praise can a politician expect—even one as skilful and successful as my right hon. Friend?

The achievements are endorsed not only by bodies representing landowners and farmers, but by farmers themselves. I was interested to hear the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) quote the words of Oliver Walston, who is a famous Cambridgeshire—but socialist—farmer. In an article in *The Sunday Telegraph* on 24 May, he said:

"The uprooting of the Common Agricultural Policy as we know it has, not surprisingly, made taxpayers, consumers and the Government happy. British farmers should also join the celebrations. For the first time in 30 years the link between subsidies and production has been cut, so no longer will it mean that the more wheat I grow the more subsidy I receive. Since our farms are larger and more efficient than Continental farms, British farmers are uniquely equipped to flourish in this brave new world. But to do so we must forget the past."

Those are wise words from another eminent Cambridgeshire farmer.

Despite the positive achievements, there is a down side for many of my farmers, the most critical part of which is the impact on their farm incomes. The NFU's view is that agriculture's total revenue will be down by £400 million in 1995-96. The price of inputs will continue to rise. That will be offest by lower cereal prices in feed costs, but the net effect will be a 16 per cent. fall in farming incomes. After taking inflation into account, there will be an estimated fall of 28 per cent. in real terms by 1996.

It is estimated—the figures are not yet definite—that arable farmers could face a cut of £12 per acre after compensation is paid for set-aside. That view is reinforced by Mr. John Nix, who is a respected agricultural economist. In a recent publication, he said:

"farm incomes per hectare in the UK are now well below half the mid 1960s figure in real terms, while national average earnings of the rest of the population have risen by about a third."

The changes will affect not only farm incomes directly, but the rural economy as a whole. A response is required at two levels; first by individual farmers, and secondly by the Government. How will individual farmers respond? Their first idea will be to cut labour. Fewer people will be required with 15 per cent. set-aside. If the EC directives on working hours go through, the problem will be exacerbated, because there will be less flexibility in farm working hours. Farmers will also cut their purchases of farm machinery, fertilisers and sprayers. The knock-on effects on the rural economy will be fairly serious.

In the future, there will be fewer jobs in agricultural ancillary trades. Less grain and oilseed will be transported from the farm gate to the processing plant and market. Many small road haulage firms in my constituency will feel the effects of those changes. Fewer tractors and farm implements will be purchased, and that will have a knock-on effect on the farm machinery trade, which will decline further and exacerbate the effects of the current recession.

I have some questions for the Minister, which he may be able to answer later today, but, if not, I am sure that the answers will be forthcoming. My farmers have spoken of taking land into set-aside from their oilseed rape and pulse acreages, but not from their wheat acreages. I share the concern of the hon. Member for South Shields that the grain mountain will not be reduced if such a set-aside facility is still available. In addition, compensation payments will be based on average yields for the country, but perhaps we could negotiate something on a regional basis.

There is no question but that the farmers of East Anglia, and Cambridgeshire in particular produce the highest wheat yields in the country. Ten years ago, the yield was 5 tonnes a hectare; now, it is nearer 9 tonnes. We expect that yields will increase with technological developments. Therefore, any loss of wheat yield through set-aside may be offset by the development of better strains, yielding higher output.

A constituent recently pointed out—again, this is not the direct responsibility of the Minister—that if we put 15 per cent. of our land to grass or just mowed it, that would tempt travellers and gipsies to occupy it. The county already has a severe problem with such people. If land is set aside in that way—if it is not ploughed or is left bastard fallow which I understand is the technical term for land

[Mr. Malcolm Moss]

that is partially ploughed and kept in good order ready for seeding next year—and the land is left as grass, encampments of gipsies will be attracted to it.

No decision has yet been made on the quality standard for intervention prices for feed wheat in particular. That forms a considerable proportion of the wheat output in my constituency. This year, the harvest is likely to be early because the season is well advanced and my farmers are asking for early decisions so that they can make the correct decisions on set-aside land and on which portions of their farms to nominate for that.

There is an option under the CAP agreement to provide a pre-pension scheme to encourage farmers to retire early. The United Kingdom has decided to opt out of that scheme because the Government believe that it is aimed at those countries with many small farms and that it is an attempt to encourage restructuring.

In Cambridgeshire, the average size of farm is 200 acres. The owner of such a farm is likely to receive £1,500 less income next year as a result of the CAP changes. Those farmers are already under pressure; they are under-capitalised and unable to reinvest out of their profits and their bank charges are accumulating. It is well known that a farm of 200 acres will not be viable in the near future —if it is now. There is a need for restructuring to increase the size of such farms to 250 or even 300 acres. If that is the case and we want profitable arable agriculture, the Government should consider ways in which they can influence people to retire from smaller farms so they can combine to form larger, restructured farms.

I also ask the Minister to use every means at his disposal to negotiate an enhanced sugar beet quota for this country's arable farmers. Sugar beet is an important cash crop, not only in my constituency, but in the rest of East Anglia. If the Government can negotiate a larger quota, that will offset some of the cuts faced by other sectors.

I also ask the Minister to protect the position of the Potato Marketing Board. Potatoes are another important cash crop and although they are not covered by the CAP, the Commission is considering altering the board's structure. However, it is doing an excellent job and my farmers want it to continue to do so.

I have referred to the problems that the reforms will pose for farmers' incomes. I believe that the changes will have a widespread impact not only in my constituency, but throughout the farming economy. It is important that a high priority is given to co-ordination between different Departments so that as labour is lost from agriculture and other problems surface, the rural economy is given all the help and assistance that it needs.

In that respect, greater powers should be given to the Rural Development Commission, which has an important role in providing alternative employment. Road building in rural areas should also be given a higher priority. In my constituency, the dualling of the A47 and the A10 will have an important effect as it will open up the region and help to prevent increased unemployment. The enterprise agencies, which have an important role in rural areas, should also be given greater consideration and, perhaps, receive better funding.

The wide-ranging CAP reforms will be welcomed by taxpayers and, to an extent, by my efficient farmers, but problems will arise. I hope that my right hon. Friend will address those problems in the detailed negotiations that are to follow.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must remind the House that a 10-minute limit on speeches will operate between 11.30 and 1 o'clock.

11.27 am

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): I add my protest to that of my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) at the fact that we are holding such an important debate on a Friday morning. I understand why the Minister chose to make a statement on the completion of those negotiations on a Friday, because it was an admirable opportunity to accentuate the positive before hon. Members had time to analyse properly the implications of the reforms. That same defence does not apply today. The CAP reforms will have a greater long-term effect on our constituencies than anything that was discussed in prime parliamentary time this week.

This morning I should have been at a governors' meeting of Llysfasi agricultural college. It would have been nice if I had been able to attend and report on the clarification of the CAP reforms. Tonight, I am to attend an important and long-advertised public meeting in Glyn Ceirog—a lovely village a long way from London. That means that I, too, will be unable to remain for the entire debate, for which I apologise to the House. I shall study in detail the Minister's reply in the *Official Report*, not least because many of the measures in the reform agreement require United Kingdom action.

When the Minister made his recent statement to the House, I asked about the possible knock-on effect of the proposed cuts in cereal prices on grass-reared red meat production. I trust that the Minister will give a more considered reply to that problem today than he has previously. Already poultry and pigmeat production is growing at the expense of beef and lamb.

It would be churlish not to acknowledge that some farmers have apparently been helped by measures different from those in the original MacSharry package. However, many questions remain. Will the quota and set-aside measures be adequately policed in other EC countries, or here, without increasing bureaucracy for farmers or by increasing numbers of Ministry officials? That will be difficult in my area, because the Agriculture Department of the Welsh Office has closed its office in Ruthin. Farmers will be uncertain about their future until details of the administrative arrangements, especially details of the environmental part of the package, are known. I understand that the Minister will have powers to introduce a long-term habitat management scheme. When will such a scheme be introduced, and will he consider ways to ensure that it will be beneficial?

We must hope that the agreed measures will lead to a reduction in overall budget costs. I also hope that food prices will go down and that the reductions will be passed to the consumer and will not add to the inflated profits that our supermarkets already make compared with their European counterparts.

I should like to deal with some issues specific to the predominant type of farming in my constituency. The headage limit retention is welcome. The transferability of

sheep premium rights may be good, but my farmers are worried about the movement of saleable quota out of areas such as mine or less-favoured areas. I do not know which criterion the Minister will use, although it would be interesting to know. I am delighted to note that he is taking an anti-free market interventionist approach to the issue.

In the context of the sheep annual scheme, why is an eligible ewe restricted to the application period, which means that it must have lambed by 7 January 1992? That will be very restricting. Could that be changed to a retention period to allow claims for ewes lambing up to 17 April 1993? As we have heard, in its press release the Country Landowners Association welcomed the reforms with one and a half cheers. When we see all the detail, and if the welcome inclusion of environmental considerations works, I sincerely hope that farmers and consumers will be able to raise three cheers.

11.32 am

Mr. Peter Atkinson (Hexham): I am delighted to speak for the first time in the House. I add my congratulations to those that have already been extended to the Minister on bringing back this package of reforms from Brussels. The Minister is popular with farmers in my Northumbrian constituency. I understand that the National Farmers Union has given the package one and a half cheers. Those of us who know the NFU know that that is equal to a standing ovation of the sort given to Pavarotti.

Popularity is unusual for a Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in Britain, and I urge my right hon. Friend to make the most of it: to make hay while the sun shines. He deserves to be popular for what he has gained. I do not make light of the problems facing farmers, especially those in my constituency, because, despite the package, they will suffer a considerable reduction in future income. However, they can face those difficult times in the knowledge that the enormous discriminatory handicap contained in MacSharry stage 1 has been dropped. They are grateful for that.

Farming and forestry are the cornerstone of industry in my constituency, which covers more than 1,000 sq miles —I understand that it is the second largest in England. It extends from the Scottish borders to the Durham border in the south, to Cumberland in the west and to the city of Newcastle in the east. It has some enormous natural prominences, including Britain's largest man-made forest and the Kielder reservoir, which is the largest man-made reservoir in Britain.

My constituency is spectacular and remote, and the countryside is wonderful. That brings disadvantages, because it is hard to make a living, especially in the hills. Sheep and hill cattle dominate in the north, and cereals and dairying dominate in the valleys and river valleys and in the beautiful remote valley of Allendale in the south. Apparently there are three sheep to every person in my constituency. The town of Hexham has a large livestock mart and dealers and buyers from all over the country come to it. They also come there from South Shields.

Recent comments by the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) about BSE and the Government's secrecy, as he called it, about that disease was not well recieved in Hexham mart. Some letters from butchers are winging their way to him. I hope that the hon. Gentleman can explain his allegations, because they are seriously damaging the meat trade in my constituency.

Of course, farming is not the only industry in my constituency. Since the war, improved communications have made the Tyne valley villages and Ponteland and Darras Hall centres for commuters to Newcastle and other parts of Tyneside. I am lucky to count among my constituents many people who make a significant contribution to life in the region. The industry is mostly rural and many small businesses have been set up in the past 13 years. I am glad to say that the Government attitude towards such business has encouraged many of them, even in these difficult times, to become vital middle-sized businesses which the constituency needs.

The constituency is full of history. Hadrian's wall is still among the great monuments of the world, even though enterprising and efficient locals removed a great deal of stone. It no longer serves to keep people out: on the contrary, we welcome visitors and tourists.

Hexham is a lively and ancient market town, with a spectacular abbey. There are plenty of castles, notably the one at Prudhoe, and there are many smaller fortifications dating from the turbulent border wars. George Stephenson's workshop is at Wylam, and Thomas Bewick was born at Cherryburn. Those names are a testament to the engineering and cultural history of the constituency. History lives on in the people, many of whom bear the surnames of the great riding or reiving families of the border wars.

For many years, Northumberland was one of Britain's best-kept secrets, but, thanks to the efforts of the Northumbrian tourist board, tourism in now one of the constituency's major industries. Tourists come for the magnificent scenery, the history and the unrivalled sporting facilities. Bloodstock and racing are important in the constituency; Hexham has a marvellous racecourse, with one of the best national grandstands of any racecourse in the country. However, racegoers need a fairly heavy pair of shoes on windy days.

I pay tribute to my predecessor, Alan Amos, who represented the constituency from 1987. He set a fearsome example as a hard-working constituency Member and I shall have to work hard to do as well. Many of my constituents are grateful to him and I suspect that many Ministers remember his terrier-like pursuit of problems. Another of my predecessors is Lord Rippon and some senior Members may recall Sir Rupert Speir, who is alive and well and hale and hearty in the constituency. He offered me much good advice during and after the election campaign. He told me, "For God's sake don't make a long maiden speech."

The hon. Member for South Shields spoke about the impact of the reforms on wildlife. There is no doubt that intensive arable cropping has not been friendly to wildlife. These reforms have the ability to change that—once again, I disagree with the hon. Member for South Shields. They switch support from yields to production—one of the demands made many years ago by the Game Conservancy Trust, which understands much about these matters, as a way to make modern farming much more friendly to wildlife. Those who produce more than the average for their region will reduce yields, which we hope will lead to less use of the non-essential pesticides that attack the insects on which many ground-nesting birds, including game birds, and other wildlife depend.

Most important is the rotational set-aside, which will bring back to the English landscape one of its lost features —the winter stubble fields that some of us remember from

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our youth. As we now know, winter stubble is a reservoir for many beneficial insects; that is why the new scheme of rotational set-aside will be of immeasurable benefit to wildlife and game birds.

I know that the Minister has a keen interest in this, but I hope that he seeks advice from organisations such as the Game Conservancy Trust on the best way to manage rotational set-aside, because in the detail and the fine print of management lies the benefit of wildlife.

11.40 am

Mr. Paul Tyler (Cornwall, North): It is a great pleasure to congratulate the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) on an eloquent and charming speech. He said that Northumbria had been one of the best-kept secrets of the country, but I feel certain that he will make sure that the House is not allowed to forget his constituency.

As we are permitted only a short time, I shall concentrate on some of the main elements of the package that the Minister has outlined. I intend to give credit where credit is due. It is not to the benefit of the House if we look always at the disadvantages and never at the achievements of the Government. Therefore, I give credit to the Minister and his team of officials for the way in which they have managed to exclude some of the discriminatory features of the previous packages.

I and some of my parliamentary colleagues went to Brussels to meet Commissioner MacSharry early this year and we were able to cover some of the issues on which the Minister touched. We had a long meeting and I know that Commissioner MacSharry welcomed our evidence that it is not simply the party in government that was concerned about the way in which the United Kingdom's farmers would be affected and that others shared its view.

The debate is about not just agriculture but the rural economy and the rural environment. The Minister may agree that it is unfortunate that his remit is concerned precisely with production and not with those wider issues. In a smaller party, I am lucky enough to have a remit that covers all rural issues, so I can look rather more widely at the implications of the package. I am tempted to suggest that the common agricultural policy should no longer be so described. Instead, it should be described as a policy for the common agricultural and rural environment, or CARE, because a number of the features that the Minister described are as much concerned with the environment, the economy and the employment patterns of rural areas as they are simply with agriculture.

Another beneficial side to the package, which we should be ready to acknowledge, is that if prices drop and we stop dumping subsidised products on the world market, we can do much more to help the developing world than aid will ever achieve. We should give credit to the Council of Ministers for that. If—it is a very big "if" and, as a number of hon. Members have implied, the jury is still out on this—the disastrous slide in farm incomes in recent years is reversed, the Council of Ministers should have credit for that, too.

An even greater doubt is whether this package will fulfil the requirements of the GATT round. We all know that the GATT round is in doubt because of the American attitude in the run-up to their election in November. President Bush is unlikely to agree to any major advances. There is real doubt whether, even if this package is allowed to fall into the green box, a large amount of American support will similarly be allowed. Clearly, there has to be a quid pro quo.

The criteria that GATT has prepared do not seem, in my view and that of many other commentators, to permit the present package to fall into that box. Earlier this year, Agra Europe said:

> "Compensatory payments under the EC's MacSharry plan *and* US deficiency payments quite clearly cannot be classified as 'green box' decoupled payments."

I accept that there have been changes—the Minister may describe them as nuances—but this is still in doubt, and it is of critical importance that we maintain momentum on the GATT round. I can only agree with the NFU when it says:

> "The progress towards reform that the package represents should be used by EC negotiators to reach a satisfactory settlement of the GATT trade talks."

It recognises that this is but a first step, not a conclusion.

A number of hon. Members on both sides of the House have rightly paid a great deal of attention to set-aside, in which there has been a massive increase. The Minister has made it clear that it is not yet possible to know for how long this will be necessary. We know, because he has been quite frank about this, that he has misgivings.

We need to know whether this is intended to be a transitional or a long-term solution. If it is the latter, the package is not adequate to meet the task, because it does not fulfil the essential requirement of positive environmental features. We know that the Minister will have a lot of room for manoeuvre on that, but it will be important very early on for farmers to know what will be involved in terms of countryside management and stewardship schemes.

We all understand that there are major problems. The hon. Members for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) and for Hexham referred to the differences between rotational and non-rotational set-aside. We have major problems with rotational set-aside, which does not offer the environmental opportunities offered by non-rotational set-aside. We understand the difficulties and we hope that the Minister will be able to say, quite clearly and quite soon, how this hybrid arrangement will work.

The release of extra nitrogen automatically and naturally into the soil may be counter-productive with rotational set-aside. We want to link set-aside to explicit extensification. That is the most important advantage that we can gain here, particularly as it will increase the permanent natural habitat.

In my area, the great Duchy of Cornwall, in the past 10 years alone 70 miles of hedgerow and an area of wildlife habitat twice the size of Penzance have been lost. Those who know the area will know that Penzance is quite a sizeable town. Rather than just using financial considerations, set-aside should be considered against that background.

The obsession with set-aside will not please anybody. It does not please the farmers—their training, their experience and all their instincts are against it. It does not please the conservationsts unless it has built into it real environmental benefits. It does not please the consumer, who will not see any great advantage. Most important of all—the Minister has been frank about this—taxpayers will find it difficult to accept that they will have to subsidise the farmer for doing nothing. It is difficult enough to

persuade them to subsidise greater productivity in years of surplus, but to subsidise dereliction will look like featherbedding—the accusation of yesteryear.

We feel strongly that the room for manoeuvre that the Minister has in the present package, which we hope he will retain, should be used as fully as possible to encourage greater habitat conservation and creation and also to enable public recreation and access to be extended. That has to be the right answer.

You will see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I am industriously turning over pages of my notes in an effort to keep within your time limit.

The Minister referred to the need to try to improve the level playing field within the Community. It is familiar to us all, in terms of animal welfare, food hygiene and a number of discretionary schemes, that our farmers, for various reasons, have either not had the same benefits as their competitors or have been disadvantaged in other ways. We welcome the opportunity, which the Minister has said he intends to take during the United Kingdom presidency, to tackle the problem. It is to be hoped that, at the end of the year, the present situation will be much improved.

As I said at the outset, the package involves the entire rural economy. As the details come forward, the Minister's room for manoeuvre must be considered on an interdepartmental basis. It is——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

11.50 am

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) on his witty and interesting maiden speech. He and I have already established that we have several things in common. Our constituencies are similar, and the sheep-to-people ratio to which he referred is similar in both constituencies. We both share the experience of having the chance to come to the House because of the misfortune of others. It is clear from what my hon. Friend has said that Hexham will be as well represented while he is its Member as it has been in the past.

I had the lucky privilege of being one of the two parliamentary private secretaries at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for about the final year of the previous Parliament. That experience taught me a great deal, quite apart from the obvious advantage that it gave me an inside view of the work of the Ministry, which I am happy to confirm to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) is not run like a secret society.

I also had a chance to learn a great deal about two remarkable people. First, there was my right hon. and noble Friend Lady Trumpington, who served for five years at the Ministry and who was a great credit to it, to the Conservative party and to the Government. She did a great deal for British agriculture. In saying that my right hon. and noble Friend had a personality that was larger than life, I must refer also to her charming and commanding presence. During the election campaign she kindly came to Ryedale. We went to visit a farm and as we arrived in the yard we say that about 20 farmers were present. The car door swung open and my right hon. and noble Friend's left leg emerged. "Hi, boys," was the greeting. It was an object lesson on how to disarm a potentially difficult audience. The farmers would not have been difficult, however, as they recognised how much my right hon. and noble Friend had done for them.

I had a fascinating insight into how my right hon. Friend runs his Ministry and I learnt of his determination to ensure that reform of the common agricultural policy would not mean discrimination for United Kingdom farmers. During the general election I was able to say to all the farmers in my constituency that there would be no sell-out, no discrimination, no back-door acceptance and no disadvantageous reform package. I could say all that with conviction and sincerity because it was true.

I was wrong on one count, however, because I predicted that CAP reform would probably have to wait until United Kingdom presidency. The reform package came rather sooner than I anticipated. My right hon. Friend told the House, extremely graphically, that that was because Mr. MacSharry and some of our colleagues in the other member states were hoping for a different outcome of the general election on 9 April.

In a different sense, perhaps I was right after all. We have an outline package and we have in place the principles for reform, but we can see increasingly that the agreement reached last month is by no means the conclusion of the reform agenda. Indeed, it is only the beginning. Considerable detail still has to be agreed. There is much for my right hon. Friend to do during his presidency of the Agriculture Council, which will begin on 1 July. I am sure that the House and United Kingdom agriculture as a whole wish him well.

The National Farmers Union, the Country Landowners Association and the Tenant Farmers Association have provided excellent briefs in advance of the debate. Given the shortage of time, there is no need for any of us to restate their conclusions except to underline the congratulations that they offer my right hon. Friend. They have itemised their concerns and I wish to draw attention to only two matters of detail before mentioning five points of principle.

First, on detail, when we are considering the arrangements that we need to ensure that quota is not transferred from sensitive areas, we should not do so on the basis that sensitive areas and less-favoured areas come within the same definition. There are areas such as the wolds in north-east Yorkshire—I am sure that there are other such areas in other parts of the country—that are not less-favoured areas but in which sheep farming is crucial to the livelihoods of farmers.

Secondly, I ask my right hon. Friend to do everything that he can to ensure that the quality threshold for intervention for cereals applies to feed wheat and feed barley. If it does not, there will be disastrous consequences for United Kingdom cereal producers.

I move on to my five points of principle. First, it would be a downright scandal if the extremely significant advance and progress of EC farm policy reform that was agreed last month does not lead to an early settlement of GATT. The Americans must move. Their reaction—that of a threatened trade war—reinforces our suspicion that there may have been a lack of commitment or of political will in the first instance.

Secondly, when it comes to progress with CAP reform and our assessment of it, we must set in context other recent developments within the EC, with particular reference to the Maastricht treaty. The principles upon

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which the reforms are based are essentially non-discriminatory. Farmers want and deserve fair and equal terms, and that demands that other countries play by the rules. Unfortunately, we know all too well of many examples of other member states not doing so. Strengthening the rule of law within the EC, as agreed at Maastricht, is an essential item which we must not lose in any renegotiation or modification of the Maastricht treaty. It seems to many of us that it is scandalous that strengthening the rule of law in the Community is the only way of ensuring that other member states keep their promises.

Thirdly, there is the effect of the package on the consumers. It would be a gross misunderstanding of the effect of farm prices on retail food prices if we were to expect from the package any material reduction in food prices in the shops, perhaps with the exception of pigmeat and poultry. All the evidence seems to point in the opposite direction. In cash terms, farmers' prices are what they were 10 or more years ago. That is why food prices have risen less than the rate of inflation. If farm-gate prices had kept pace with inflation, food prices would probably have done much the same, or would have become even more expensive in real terms. The non-discriminatory aspect of the reform package is to be welcomed, but it seems certain that farm incomes will fall. That is extremely serious. Undoubtedly some farmers will leave the industry. In time market prices must provide a more realistic return to farmers if they are to make a satisfactory profit out of farming the land.

Fourthly, this significant debate coincides with the Rio summit. We still have much to do to secure the long-term future of our own environment. My right hon. Friend always rightly insisted that environmental features should be central to farm policy. There are important advantages in the CAP reform package, especially the arrangements for stocking limits. That is an important and significant advance, and the way that the limits are implemented will have far-reaching consequences both on the way that large rural areas are farmed and on the viability of farms.

I have never been in any doubt that the best way to keep our landscape as it is is to keep farmers farming the land. That means much more than environmental sweeteners. It means a viable, competitive and profitable agriculture industry—an industry confident in its future. The CAP reform package is a first step towards ensuring that that confidence can be restored.

12 noon

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): I add my congratulations to those already offered to the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) on his maiden speech. I appreciate the position that he was in when he made it, as I was in the same position only a couple of weeks ago.

This so-called reform package has been trailed as a great victory for the Minister. It is interesting that Conservative Members were selective in their quotations from press releases from the Country Landowners Association and the National Farmers Union. The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) quoted John Fellowes in his congratulations to the Minister. However, he did not complete the quote, which continued:

"However, an immensely complicated array of bureaucratic quota controls now faces our beef producers. Even in the arable sector, the arrangements will be excessively complex. This bureaucracy will add to the costs of the industry and to the costs of the consumer."

A reform package that will add to the costs of industry and the consumer is no reform; it simply compounds the problem. Currently, the CAP costs £14 per week per family, and even Conservative Members have said that in real terms farmers' incomes have been falling radically. Indeed, every day 26 people—farmers, farm workers and ancillary industry employees—leave the industry. Conservative Members laughed when my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) mentioned state aid for family farmers, yet I know many farmers who are having to apply for family credit because their basic incomes have fallen below the means-tested levels. Some £5,000 or £6,000 a year for a seven-day, 52-week-a-year job is no real income.

In 1984, west Wales was dealt a terrible blow with the imposition of milk quotas. They were quite literally imposed overnight. Not only were the farmers hit, but so was the ancillary industry, especially milk processing. Two creameries in Dyfed closed within 12 months, with a loss to the rural economy of hundreds of jobs. We have not recovered from that.

I am worried about the detail of the reform package. There are relatively few details in the statement that the Minister deposited in the Vote Office. Although there is no planned increase in milk quotas, in 1993 it is possible that there will be another 1 per cent. cut, with yet another 1 per cent. cut in 1994.

Mr. Gummer: I made it clear in my speech that I do not expect any such cuts, which would happen only if market conditions demanded it. As there is to be a significant cut in milk production in Spain, there will be a greater importation into Spain from the remainder of the Community. Therefore, it is unlikely that there will be any cuts in the quotas.

Mr. Ainger: I would welcome the right hon. Gentleman's statement if it contained a categorical guarantee. The farmers of west Wales have not recovered from the 1984 imposition of milk quotas. I hope that they will not be put in the same position in 1993 and 1994. It is all very well to say that it is hoped that they will not be put in that position, but what happens if the market is not as expected and the farmers are told that there will be a cut? Farmers have to plan, so it is not fair just to say that there is a possibility of further cuts but that the Minister will do his best to ensure that they do not happen.

The rural economy of west Wales is suffering from deprivation, yet rural areas have not traditionally suffered the hardships of inner-city areas. The highest levels of unemployment in Wales are now generally in rural rather than urban areas. The possibility of a cut of 15 per cent. in the price of beef will have a knock-on effect, and it will not be compensated for by cheaper feed prices. That will hit beef-raising areas. The possibility—and I put it no more strongly than that, in view of what the Minister has said—of another 1 per cent. cut in milk quotas is simply going too far.

Wales expected far more from the so-called CAP reform package. It has not dealt with the fundamental problem of only £1 of every £3 spent on the CAP going back to the farmers. The Country Landowners

Association implies that there will be more, rather than less, bureaucracy, so the possibility of a switch from bureaucratic expenditure to the farmers' pocket—which is what is needed—seems remote. Indeed, it will be the reverse.

We need an increase in Government or European expenditure in west Wales, directly into the pockets of farmers. That would have a significant spin-off in the rural economy. Unfortunately, there is nothing in the reform package that would achieve that. There would be a continuing closure of family farms with more and more people leaving the industry. Because MacSharry's proposals appeared to be so draconian, and because they have been mitigated and some of the discriminatory elements have been altered to the benefit of Britain, people view the reform package with a great sense of relief. Unfortunately, there is still a great deal of pain because it does not solve the problems mentioned by hon. Members on both sides of the House. It is a pity that the Minister could not come back with a far better deal.

12.8 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) on his maiden speech. He described his constituency in a most sensitive and colourful way and rightly paid tribute to his hard-working predecessor. We look forward to many more speeches from him in our debates.

Farming is in crisis in the United Kingdom, in Europe and in north America. In a quarter of a century in public life, I have never known a period when agriculture was so concerned about its future. I represent an area—Macclesfield, in Cheshire—which has some of the finest grasslands and grazing in the country. My family firm—not that I have worked for it—of auctioneers, valuers and surveyors has been associated with farming for 150 years. Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench will not doubt my pedigree for making the remarks that I do.

Farming is not just a quaint, old-fashioned pastime adopted by those living in rural communities, to make them more attractive to the residents of our towns and cities who visit them for day trips and holidays. Farming is an important industry and a vital way of life. It is at the heart of our rural economy and a major contributor to our nation's wealth. It directly and indirectly employs millions of people, provides food for us all, and improves the natural environment—which is increasingly important.

Farming shapes the countryside and the character of our nation, but it is at a crossroads at home and in the rest of the Community. Worldwide pressure to reduce protectionist measures will continue unabated, and the need to contain the cost of the common agricultural policy will remain high on the political agenda.

In general, I warmly welcome the common agricultural policy package won by my right hon. Friend the Minister, but some of the finer details remain to be worked out. I await their revelation with some interest. I warmly welcomed my right hon. Friend's assurance that United Kingdom milk quotas will not be reduced—I hope he meant for the foreseeable future. British farmers, particularly in my constituency, have been badly treated in respect of milk quotas. It would be ridiculous to accept further cutbacks, given that we are nowhere near self-sufficient in liquid milk, let alone in that required by creameries and cheesemaking plants.

It would also be crazy further to increase our balance of trade deficit in a product that we can probably produce better than any other country in the Community. United Kingdom farmers can meet the challenges that my right hon. Friend described today. Pressures mean that they must continue to adapt to the new conditions and demands that will be placed on them. Such changes are not easily assimilated, but it is the role of the Government of the day and of the local Member of Parliament on all occasions to defend the interests of British farmers.

No mention has been made of the future of the milk marketing boards, although changes are being forced through because of pressures from the Community. I accept that change is necessary, but there is deep concern, not because farmers do not acknowledge the need for it, but because of fears that under a voluntary co-operative system some dairies will undoubtedly seek to buy farmers away from the boards. That is already happening in Cheshire, with Bodfari.

Farmers who enter into a direct relationship with a dairy will have no protection if it seeks to drag down the price of milk. The downward pressure on prices could cause real difficulties. My hon. Friend the Minister of State shakes his head, but perhaps he does not understand the situation. Unlike many other commodities, milk must be sold immediately. Farmers do not have the luxury of being able to bide time while they find a better price. If they do not sell at the day's going rate, the milk is wasted. Those problems will affect many areas where dairying is so important.

One cannot abandon a regulated market. The unfettered free market ideology has its disadvantages. It is naive and dangerous, for farmers and consumers alike, to believe that it is possible to sustain a free market ideology. My message holds equally true in respect of the wider trade in food and agricultural products. Protectionism is not necessarily bad if its intention is to ensure stability, continuity of supply, and fair and free trade.

Nowhere is that more clearly true than in the poultry sector. Our own producers are subject to the most stringent health regulations—but imported eggs are not. The inevitable result is that imported eggs are cheaper. That is not free trade, and it is certainly not fair trade. Similarly, New Zealand lamb is undermining British prices substantially, yet New Zealand farmers are going out of business because of lack of profitability. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister of State is aware that a collapse in the spring lamb trade in this country would have a knock-on effect on the autumn store lamb sales and would create even more trouble the following year. That is an example of where, in the medium to long term, superficially free but unfair trade will not benefit farmers as producers, or consumers.

Dairy farms are cleaning up at great expense to rid themselves of effluent. Even after grant assistance, the investment required is massive. One farm in my constituency had to borrow £60,000 for that purpose. I tell my hon. Friend the Minister of State that that takes some paying back—and all the time our farmers are undercut by countries having few if any controls. Is that free, fair trade?

The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) mentioned that the big supermarkets and superstores have established a dominant position in the distribution and

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sale of food, so much so that they may shortly have food producers, in the form of the farming industry, by the very jugular. Their ability to use their suppliers to improve cash flow by taking extended credit is a dangerous development for agriculture. Is that fair trade, and do buyers need to operate in that way when, in the main, they make substantial profits?

America appears to be winning the argument that European farmers are unfairly subsidised. That argument should be exposed for the fallacy that it is. When I pressed that point on my right hon. Friend the Minister towards the end of the last Parliament, he stated that

"United States and EC levels of support are not very different; both are high and the need for reform on both sides of the Atlantic remains pressing."

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on that response. I only wish that that point had been more robustly made in the GATT talks.

My theme, which I am sure will strike a chord with many right hon. and hon. Members, is that free trade in perishable food is a dangerous concept.

12.18 pm

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I extend my warm congratulations to the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) on his excellent maiden speech. I do not intend to become involved in a partisan squabble, but the Minsiter made a head count of those right hon. and hon. Members present for the debate. It is noteworthy that my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) is the only Scottish Member who has been present for the whole debate. Also, although I have heavy commitments in my constituency this afternoon, I shall remain for the wind-up speeches because I consider this debate to be of utmost importance.

I wish to add a guarded welcome to the long-awaited agreement on the reform of the CAP. The delay in achieving agreement has undoubtedly had an adverse effect on the morale of an industry already under siege. For a long time during the period leading up to the agreement, farmers were left in no man's land. They were hampered because they could not reasonably plan for the future and, in every industry, forward planning is the key to success. We must strive to give agriculture the stability that it requires to prosper and it is reasonable that farmers should expect to know what the next five or 10 years hold in store for them. Only then will we witness the increase in confidence that is so urgently and sorely needed. I welcome the fact that that protracted period of uncertainty has now ended.

In my constituency of Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, one in five families depends either directly or indirectly on agriculture and the CAP reforms were therefore of paramount importance. The very fabric of rural communities was threatened and diversification is not a word which has much meaning for farmers in less-favoured areas such as my constituency—and, indeed, 80 per cent. of the land mass of Wales. Climatic and geographical features make it impossible for upland farmers to diversify, but, curiously, it is the very factors that mitigate against diversification which ensure that Welsh lamb is undoubtedly the best in the world.

In February, I went with my hon. Friends the Members for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) and for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) to visit Mr. MacSharry in Brussels. We put the Welsh farmers' case to him, and I am pleased that many of the points argued for by Plaid Cymru were incorporated in the final agreement.

There is no doubt that the Commission's original proposals were discriminatory to upland producers. The adoption of the original draft proposals would have created a crisis of enormous proportions throughout Wales. Sheep producers would have been very hard hit. Plaid Cymru argued that upland producers should be more directly supported and that that principle was paramount. It appears that the Commission has recognised that, thus acknowledging the special difficulties of farmers in the less-favoured areas. For the reasons that I have given, I am thankful for that.

Plaid Cymru's delegation argued strongly that the sheep annual premium headages should be increased to 1,000 per partner in less-favoured areas and that there should be an increase elsewhere. We also argued that 50 per cent. premium should be paid on stock above the headage limits. It was acknowledged that, if our proposals were adopted, 98 per cent. of Welsh farmers in the less-favoured areas would be secure against financial ruin. I welcome that part of the agreement.

I welcome, too, the increase in the suckler cow premium, which is to be without headage limit, but let me pause on the phrase "optional national top-up". I urge the Government to take those words to heart and put their money where their mouth is. Paying lip service to the concept and offering no additional top-up simply will not do. I call on the Government to state their position clearly and urgently as failure to do so will inevitably lead to confusion and will again damage morale in a period of indecision or uncertainty.

We must strive to address the lack of confidence in the industry and this is an opportune time to do so. Market prices for lamb are disastrously low. In agriculture, as in every industry, marketing is a key to success. I welcome the initiation by the Secretary of State for Wales of Welsh Food Promotions Ltd. 18 months ago, but call on the Government to sink further funds into that aspect of marketing—to put their money where their mouth is. That rather crude phrase best expresses the feelings of those in the industry who see Wales lagging miles behind our European competitors in marketing. Almost every other European country can show us the way. As with everything nowadays, it boils down to expertise and specialist knowledge, which in turn boil down to finance.

A product cannot be properly marketed without advertisement and initiative and I call on the Government urgently to allocate extra funding to Welsh Food Promotions Ltd. so that it can extend and promote the marketing of Welsh lamb the world over. I have contacted the chairman of the Welsh tourist board, Mr. Prys Edwards, to enlist his help in marketing. All our European partners have a place in their advertising material for regional foods and I consider that Welsh lamb—the world beater—would be a great attraction in the advertisement of Welsh holidays. I am pleased that the board has accepted that in principle and will provide for it.

It is incredible that we are not marketing what is the best sheepmeat in the world. The wine growers of France market their product properly and worldwide. It is high time that the Government adopted a market-led recovery ideal in the sheep and beef sector, and there is no excuse for

the inadequate funding of marketing. After all, in every other industry as much importance is attached to marketing as to manufacturing, and rightly so.

I draw attention to the accompanying measures in the CAP reform document. Under the heading "Environmental protection" is a reference to aid arrangements being used exclusively to compensate those concerned for measures that have a positive effect on the environment. Naturally, I consider that to be a positive step forward. My constituency is one of three pilot areas in which a scheme called Tir Cymen is to operate. It is roughly equivalent to the stewardship schemes operated by the Countryside Commission. The Government should ensure maximum funding for that scheme, which is to be operated by the Countryside Council for Wales, as it offers a great deal to rural areas; it gives positive incentives to forms of husbandry that are environmentally sound and may well create substantial further job opportunities in areas where it is operative.

I know that the Countryside Council for Wales is enthusiastic about the scheme and I trust that its enthusiasm—and, indeed, the current interest among farmers in my constituency—will be met with abundant funding. That is of the utmost importance because if it is to succeed it must be financially attractive to the farming community.

A further point that Plaid Cymru urged on the Commission concerned a scheme for early retirement of farmers. I am sincere in my belief that it is vital to ensure that producers can retire with dignity and with some financial security. It is equally vital to ensure that agricultural units are available for the next generation—or those of its members who are brave enough to enter this arduous and difficult trade. I know that there is considerable concern and I am wary of the fact that the pre-pension scheme is to be optional at member state level. We are all aware that member states had the option of paying further sums under the hill compensatory allowance scheme, but the Government were reticent, to say the least, about paying.

I call on the Government without delay to bring forth plans for state-funded early retirement because without such plans we shall slip back into the quagmire of uncertainty and suffer a further blow to morale and confidence. I agree with the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) that an urgent rethink on the pre-pension scheme is required.

In conclusion, I welcome the proposals, with the caveats I have mentioned, and urge the Government to address these points without delay in the interests of sustaining a healthy agriculture industry which will benefit us all.

12.27 pm

Mr. Michael Ancram (Devizes): In the absence of the Register of Members' Interests, I should begin by declaring an interest in the debate. I am a partner in a tenant farm growing grain and beef. It is not for that reason, however, that I have sought to speak today. It is because I represent an area in Wiltshire where farmers have the same sort of problems as those already described by hon. Members and it is important that their concerns should be aired in the House.

Having been away from the House for five years, I had only heard of the reputation of the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) as Labour party spokesman on agriculture. I had heard him described as being to agriculture and agricultural prices what Cassandra was to the people of Troy during the Trojan war. Having listened to him this morning, I fear that that was something of an understatement, and I am as baffled about Labour party policy on agriculture as I was before.

I welcome the agreement that my right hon. Friend the Minister secured in Brussels. Six months ago very few of us expected him to be able to achieve such an agreement. We knew that he was against tremendous odds. It was largely due to his negotiating skills that we secured the agreement that we are debating now.

Farmers will not be cheering from the rooftops. Farmers are realists. They would have much preferred the support mechanisms to remain as they were, as they helped farmers. Equally, farmers realise that the common agricultural policy had to be reformed. They are therefore delighted at the results achieved by my right hon. Friend. He managed to secure answers to the questions which had concerned them most during the previous six months. I intend to refer to two of them.

My right hon. Friend achieved an even playing field. The MacSharry proposals had threatened efficient British agriculture in a way that would have discriminated totally against our farmers and put them at a severe disadvantage compared with their European competitors. In securing the deal, my right hon. Friend has created that even playing field, but within the deal there are certain issues that cause concern. I hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to reassure us about them. I wrote to the Minister of State about one of the issues and I intend to refer to it again, because it is of significance. It has been suggested that the intervention standard that will be required for wheat might relate to common wheat. If that were to be the case, our wheat growers would be put at a severe disadvantage. I understand that about 80 per cent. of the wheat that we produce would be outside the terms of that standard. The result would be to create once again—by the back door—an uneven playing field, to the disadvantage of our farmers. That could have significant results. Farmers might move out of wheat production into barley production—the last thing that we want. It could also have an effect on our balance of payments, since we are net exporters of wheat. I hope that when the Minister replies to the debate he will be able to reassure us that an uneven playing field will not be recreated when technical matters such as the intervention standard are at issue.

As for the longer term, reference has been made in the debate to set-aside. I believe that the set-aside programme that my right hon. Friend secured in Brussels is essential at the moment, but I am not certain that in the longer term it can necessarily be sustained. The danger is that the programme might lead to set-aside on the one hand and to intensive farming on what is left, at a time when we should be encouraging extensive farming. I hope that in the further negotiations that my right hon. Friend will undoubtedly have he will look at ways of encouraging extensive farming. In particular, he might consider looking at the point that organic farmers ought to be exempted from the requirement to set aside 15 per cent. In effect, by the farming methods that they already employ, organic farmers have already moved towards extensive, less highly productive farming.

I hope that Ministers will also consider diversification in the use of agricultural products. For example, research

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into biofuels might provide another market for agricultural products in the future. I hope that that research will be intensified and supported by the Government. It may hold the key to what we all want to see—a healthy and viable agriculture industry.

I sincerely congratulate my right hon. Friend on the deal that he achieved, but I hope that he recognises that it is not the end but the beginning of the process of securing the future of British agriculture. In seeking to ensure that we have a viable agriculture industry and that our farmers are properly rewarded, we are also seeking to ensure that the whole of our rural economy, which depends on a healthy agriculture industry, is secured for the future. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister and I thank the House for its attention.

12.34 pm

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I do not think that the hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) would deny that reform of the common agricultural policy was necessary. We all agree that any reform must benefit consumers, taxpayers, the environment, our obligations to free international trade, farmers, workers in the industry, rural areas and, perhaps most important, must bring some stability, which has been long overdue in the farming industry.

The package must be tested against those criteria. The Minister already seems to have made the judgment. He has hailed the package as a great success. Some positive steps have been made, but serious concerns remain and many right hon. and hon. Members have expressed those concerns today. We remember the claims of the mid-1980s, stated in the House, that the CAP had been reformed. That reform never materialised, which is why agriculture is in its present crisis. We must be careful, therefore, about making extravagant claims.

The fact remains that the only real reform in the package is in the cereal sector. It is true that the reduction in cereal prices of 29 per cent. over the next few years must be compared with the Commission's original suggestion of a reduction of 35 per cent. The Minister can claim a victory for that, and we must recognise that some of the discriminatory elements in the compensation for United Kingdom producers have been removed.

Both so-called victories are an important exercise in damage limitation, because discrimination remains. First, there are many more smaller producers in the rest of the Community than in the United Kingdom. Because of the way in which the regulations have been framed, many more smaller producers in the rest of the Community will be exempt from the set-aside conditions to qualify for compensation, so discrimination still remains. Secondly, the United Kingdom has many larger holdings, which will benefit because they have more flexibility to adapt to the 15 per cent. set-aside condition. They will qualify for more compensation because of the larger areas that they farm.

We should not forget that the size of the average holding in this country is between 60 and 65 hectares. Under the new deal, the qualification cut-off point for smaller units is 20 hectares or 92 tonnes of production, above which 15 per cent. of land must be set aside to qualify. How many smaller farmers in this country will fall into that category? The net result is that smaller producers will face increasing serious problems and the likelihood is that they will be forced to amalgamate and be taken over, so there will be greater concentration of production than in the past.

Similar discrimination exists in other sectors as a result of the deal. It is important to recognise that—important in terms of the European Community and particularly so in terms of the United Kingdom.

It is ludicrous that, as a result of its quota regime, the European Community is still producing about 12 per cent. more milk than we need. That is sustained by an over-generous quota system. Yet the United Kingdom is closing down processing factories because we do not have enough milk. The problem is that we were sold short in 1984, when the panic measure of quotas was introduced. The Government should recognise that, but there is no sign that the Minister intends to take the matter up with a vengeance when negotiations continue. United Kingdom milk interests have been sold down the river. The Commission and producers recognise that a 1 per cent. cut in quota, a 5 per cent. price cut over two years and a 2·5 per cent. cut per annum in the butter price might sound draconian, but I promise hon. Members that those cuts are marginal. There will be little meaningful impact on overproduction. We shall face the prospect of increasing stocks and we shall still be left with a shortfall in self-sufficiency. The damaging consequences for the United Kingdom and its milk sector are likely to continue.

The quotas are to be subject to annual review, but we must take serious measures and insist that in those reviews the Government tackle the problems facing the United Kingdom milk sector. I suggest that in his ongoing discussions the Minister should press for a redistribution of the total European Community quota so that the United Kingdom's position is recognised and so that structural overproduction in the European Community, which still remains, is also tackled. The problem in the United Kingdom is not so much overproduction as inadequate quotas and lack of self-sufficiency.

I am especially concerned about the beef sector. The stated objectives run the risk of not being realised and the previous damage caused to the United Kingdom by the loss of the variable beef premium is likely to be repeated. Input costs are likely to be reduced as a result of cereal price cuts, but the beef sector will face a 50 per cent. cut in the next few years. The amalgamation of lower input costs and a higher premium will stimulate production.

The only real weapon at the Minister's disposal is to control production by limiting intervention. It is true that the present package means a severe reduction from 750,000 tonnes into intervention this year to 350,000 tonnes by 1997, but we have heard that before. A few years ago the Minister told the House that the limit on intervention for beef would be 220,000 tonnes. That did not work and we must insist that the limits on intervention are strictly adhered to or we shall again face a crisis. We must have a guarantee from the Minister.

I do not want to be accused of being too critical so I join in the general welcome expressed for the sheepmeat regime. Previous reductions in the headage limit have damaged sheep producers in the United Kingdom. We welcome a hold being put on the present limit, and the 50 per cent. premium being paid over the headage limit will provide some relief to producers. However, we must not blind ourselves to the fact that this country's limit of 18 million ewes is too low, which is why we are unable to

increase our production and to export to other markets. It has nothing to do with the fact that other people are trying to stop us. The stabilising mechanism means a 3 per cent. cut in sheep prices this year because we are over the stabilised level, but the Minister does not seem to have tackled that problem in the negotiations.

It is amazing that the so-called reform proposals do not refer to the sugar regime. We must press for immediate action. The expensive regime, which means that the European Community is 150 per cent. over-supplied, not only damages world markets but hits the consumer. A 29 per cent. cut in cereal prices must be compared with the lack of proposed change to sugar prices. Five per cent. of European Community farmers are engaged in sugar beet production but they receive unparalleled protection.

The agreement states that the Council must instruct the Commission to suggest proposals to reform the sugar regime by the end of the year. We hope that that will happen, but we are entitled to know what principles the Government will use to tackle the long overdue reform of the sugar regime. The claimed benefits for the consumer must be studied carefully. The consumer has been promised benefits before, which never developed. I believe——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry, but the hon. Member's time is up.

12.44 pm

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): I apologise to the House for being absent for a few minutes. I had to see a medical adviser. In this company it would not be unreasonable to ask whether any hon. Member has had his foot trodden on by a horse. The only pleasant part is when the horse takes its foot off.

Pleased as I am with the reform, the fact remains that during the past few weeks decisions have been taken which will have a more marked effect on British agriculture and the farmers of Europe than anything since the introduction of the common agricultural policy.

I do not envy my right hon. Friend the Minister his task, which has been one of imposing pain on farmers—a task born of common sense and necessity. It was no longer tolerable to find an endless quantity of money to force up the price of food artificially within the Community or to ruin world markets with taxpayers' money.

My right hon. Friend has almost achieved the impossible of persuading farmers that they have a good deal, while starting down a road which will end at the objectives that he and his fellow EC Agriculture Ministers have set themselves. It has finally been decided that we shall no longer subsidise the price of food. It has been acknowledged that the CAP was a social policy to maintain a standard of life—for the olive grower in Sicily and the sheep farmer in the Orkneys—which would sustain rural population and benefit the regions concerned.

Implementing the proposal will be difficult, and may be costly. I was interested to hear my right hon. Friend claim that there would be economies. That is unlikely in the immediate future. We are entering an era similar to the days of deficiency payments, when the arguments will centre not on the prices of products but on the social subsidy, whether it be paid to farmers direct, paid for set-aside, or in whatever form the central exchequers devise to maintain regional and rural policies. That is what has changed and I see no objection to it, but there will be a battle between the taxpayer and the beneficiary, and it seems set to continue for many years.

My right hon. Friend will have read the report on cereal prices by the Select Committee on Agriculture, of which I had the honour to be Chairman. The Committee concluded that a substantial cut in the guaranteed price for cereals was the way to proceed. Cereals are the leading commodity in agriculture and the cut would have a roll-on effect throughout the industry. The Community's efforts in that direction were therefore economically correct and, as everyone in the world would agree, they were the right way to deal with the difficulty.

I deliberately said "in the world" because my right hon. Friend did not say much about the GATT talks. It is fair that Community farmers should tell the Americans, Canadians and the other countries in the Cairns group that we are making a big sacrifice. We are going to impose severe price cuts on our farmers, which we hope will have the desired result of preventing surplus production from being put on to the world market at subsidised prices, and of restoring world price levels at which everyone should be able to make a living.

I hope that in the margins of the GATT agreement the diplomats will remind the Americans and the Canadians of the subsidies that they now pay to their farmers. We can reasonably say, "Come quietly, agree to GATT and accept our concessions, or be seen to be cutting your own farmers' subsidies, or stop pretending that agriculture is a barrier to an agreement on GATT." The topic has been selected by the Americans; we have responded and we deserve a friendly and resonable response.

I share my right hon. Friend's view that it is undesirable to fossilise the allocation of quotas and resources within the Community. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) argued perfectly reasonably that milk and sugar are under-produced in this country in relation to our domestic requirements. I find it surprising that it is possible to renegotiate, albeit relatively modestly within the terms of the agreement, milk quotas for Spain and for Greece, both of which entered the Community only recently. Although the sums concerned are small, the principle has been established. I hope that, having opened the door, although only by a fraction, my right hon. Friend will seek to use the argument that the Spanish and Greeks used when we try to promote our interests in dairy produce and sugar. I must declare my own interest as an adviser to British Sugar; I think that most of my right hon. and hon. Friends know about that.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has unfortunately left the Chamber. Although it is correct to say that we shall deal with the matter of sugar during our presidency, the time is coming when the artificial agreements on matters such as Africa, Caribbean and Pacific sugar and bananas could be rattled around within our Government by my right hon. Friend. The agreements are foreign aid and no pretence is made that they are anything else. They are beneficial both to the supplying countries, and to our work force and British companies. However, as long as we import half the sugar that we consume, there are British farmers who will not grow it and British refineries which will not refine it.

I was glad to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) mention sugar, and it was also mentioned by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South. A number of matters are likely to

[Mr. Jerry Wiggin]

be dealt with by the Government, of which the subject of prices is the first. The sugar regime is unique in that it costs the taxpayer nothing. I hope that Ministers will bear it in mind that if they follow the argument that, if cereal prices are cut, sugar prices must be cut, they can and should reasonably expect a drop in the price of the ultimate product. I find that highly unlikely. What will happen is that there will be a move to cut prices for the sake of it which will not prove to be an advantage to the public because the sugar regime does not cost them any money anyway. The quota matter is a simple point which applies to my right hon. Friend's constituents, as it does to all the beet growers in the country.

The processing margin is crucial to enable the processors to have the necessary amount for investment. I am proud to say that the British sugar beet grower and his processor are at least as efficient as any in Europe. I realise, of course, that my right hon. and hon. Friends will have many other sugar matters to consider.

There are environmental and forestry aspects to the agreement. I was delighted to hear my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister mention forestry at the summit in Brazil. If, wearing his hat as forestry Minister, my right hon. Friend examines the Government's record on forestry, he will not feel proud. The tragic and disastrous change in the tax regime for forestry has led to a serious cut in the amount of private land being planted with trees. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, trees look good and trees are good for the environment. Trees are a long-term natural resource into which public money has traditionally been put, not only in this country, but in many others. I hope that, in dealing with the matter of removing land from agricultural production, my right hon. Friend will give even more serious thought to a more viable, long-term and stable forestry policy.

12.54 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me to make my first speech in this historic House, which has been the springboard of democracy for the world. It is a privilege to represent the people of Cirencester and Tewkesbury. The constituency has had only four Conservative Members of Parliament since it was founded in 1918. If the current Boundary Commission's proposals are accepted, I shall be the last and the most short-lived.

I believe that, on these occasions, it is customary to pay tribute to one's predecessors. I have two very eminent ones. The first was Speaker Morrison, who had a long and distinguished career in the House. In one of his earlier speeches he said, "all taxation is bad". I shall return to that issue later.

My immediate predecessor was the right hon. Nicholas Ridley. He was not only a Treasury Minister, but commanded three great Ministries of State. He was Secretary of State for Transport, Secretary of State for the Environment and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I am sure that all hon. Members will join me in congratulating him on his elevation to the other place.

When the history of the post-war period comes to be written, I am sure that Nicholas Ridley will be regarded as one of the great original thinkers. Conservative party policies to reduce taxation, to control public expenditure, on privatisation and on the impact of the environment have been indelibly shaped by Nicholas Ridley's thoughts.

My constituency is a large rural one, and 80 per cent. of it is designated as an area of outstanding natural beauty. The Cotswolds, which comprise a large part of my constituency, are internationally renowned. In the interests of tourism, I encourage every hon. Member to pay them a visit. Although agriculture and its combined trades undoubtedly form the largest, single industry in my constituency, tourism is rapidly playing a more significant part in the local economy.

The third major industry in my constituency is defence. Two major defence firms are located on the outer edges of Cheltenham, one of which was taken over yesterday by another company. I welcome the success of that other company, but I hope that it will recognise the loyalty and hard work of the work force in my constituency and that production will be maintained in those factories. Three large RAF bases, also located in my constituency, are to be subject to closure or a significant reduction in their capacity. Therefore, I have one or two problems with the relocation of the work force in my constituency.

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on his significant achievement in negotiating the agreement. I know that that was in no small measure due to his shrewd alliances with his colleagues in the Council of Ministers. Who would have thought, just a few months ago, that we would emerge with an agreement which does not discriminate against our farmers, offers a level playing field and gives reasonable value for the taxpayer and the consumer.

There are one or two aspects of the agreement that I wish to draw to the Minister's attention, and here I should declare an interest in agriculture. We are now perilously close to the next planting season, but we still do not have the full details that are necessary for our arable farmers to make decisions about that planting season. Until farmers have the details on the common wheat and barley regime and know whether the compensation scheme will be calculated on a national or regional basis, they cannot decide whether to take the set-aside option in the coming year.

Soon after set-aside was announced, I said that it was not the best way forward in the longer term. I still maintain that. However, it is valuable for reducing production in the short term. The Minister may be interested to know that the 15 per cent. set-aside requirement will affect 1·5 million acres in Britain. The public have not yet come to grips with the large amount of land that will be lying idle.

I welcome the enshrining in the agreement of environmental aspects. The Minister will need to consult widely with many bodies about how set-aside is to be handled. If everything grows wild that will mean a nasty mixture of weeds on land that has been cultivated for many years. The birds and bees people might welcome that. Will the land be sown with proper varieties of grass that will require cutting once or twice a year to keep the area tidy? This is an important issue and the public backlash from getting it wrong could be serious for agriculture.

As I have said, my predecessor but one said that all taxation is bad. We must keep a careful eye on public expenditure. The public expenditure goal must be a set proportion of GDP of less than 40 per cent. Our major rivals, the United States, Japan and especially Switzerland,

can maintain a much lower rate than ours and still have a satisfactory social security system. If the Madrid condition of maintaining a PSBR requirement of 3 per cent. of GDP is to be met, there must be a stringent public expenditure round in the autumn. The Minister has skilfully negotiated a package which fits that public expenditure round. Although farmers may not welcome it with open arms, they accept that cuts are necessary.

The Government are imposing cuts on farmers and it would be intolerable if the consumer did not fully benefit from those cuts. One part of the food chain should not benefit at the farmers' expense.

1.2 pm

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): It is a pleasure to follow the outstanding maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown). I live in my hon. Friend's constituency, and it is easy to see why he has already made such a good impact on the constituency and in the House. I offer him my warmest congratulations. He fits well into the shoes of his distinguished predecessors and we look forward to hearing him again.

I congratulate the Minister on achieving what many of us thought impossible. He has succeeded because of his patience, steady negotiations and endless attention to detail in his discussions with fellow European Agriculture Ministers. It is a marvellous achievement and I am disappointed by the mealy-mouthed and mean speeches of Opposition Members. If they had their way, we would have signed up months ago to Mr. MacSharry and what he calls modulation. Modulation is Eurospeak for discrimination, favouring the small producers at the expense of our much larger producers and disadvantaging the big producers of flour mill cereals. It also means backing a permanent Luddite attitude towards large-scale production and favouring the small farmers in Mr. MacSharry's own country.

The farmers to whom I have spoken are pleased with the package, especially as it heralds the death knell of the co-responsibility levy. Housewives will also be pleased with the package, especially if it leads to the drop in farm produce prices being passed along the food chain. I hope that that will happen. The settlement heralds brand new thinking by the Commission which will now give money to the producers, the farmers, rather than endlessly subsidising overproduction. We got sick and tired of seeing that the people who made money and profits out of intervention were the store owners and, in too many cases, the fraudsters because fraud was widespread. This will go some way to stamping that out.

Many pressure groups have written to me and, contrary to the "cheer and a half" spoken about by Opposition Members, I have never seen so much correspondence saying that the Minister has done an outstandingly good job. Even the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has said that.

For ages, arable farmers have been saying to the Government, "Tell us what to do and we shall do it." We have made known for some time what our general drift was, but now we are spelling it out to them in much more detail. We shall not go on subsidising overproduction. We shall end the co-responsibility levy and introduce area payments. The details must still be worked out, but farmers are getting clear signs about the way in which we are moving forward.

I emphasise what my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) said about quickly establishing which type of wheat is meant, and what the quality standards will be for the intervention buying, because that will still form a large part of agricultural marketing for the time being. It would also be helpful to have details about set-aside so that we know exactly what is the base year, and what are the details of the environmental protection provisions that may be written into this.

I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on resisting rotational set-aside. Permanent set-aside in one place is better for wildlife and the environment in the long term. If, as has been said by Opposition Members, this does not offer enough of a reduction in cereals output, it is simple enough to increase the percentage that has to be set aside. We are definitely moving in the right direction.

It is not all gloom and despondency in agriculture. A small agricultural machinery firm of which my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury may know, called Ross Farm Machinery, has risen from the ashes of collapsed enterprises. This year, its first year of operation, it sold seven new combines, 100 new tractors and 160 used tractors, so arable farmers are investing and looking to the future with some confidence now that they know what is happening. They are not, as was suggested by Opposition Members, all looking to greater and greater state handouts. There is vertical integration. Cereal farmers are getting involved in pig, chicken and poultry projects, very often as joint ventures with large end users. This is a way in which farmers are doing a great deal to look after themselves and to improve their lot.

The Gloucester farmers dining club recently visited France to see what alternatives were there. They were horrified by the lack of machinery guards on farms and of inspectors to inspect the machines. They went to a flour mill where chains at head height were whirring with great speed and no effort was being made to guard them. This is by no means the level playing field—that expression that we have learnt to hate. It does not exist in factory laws and implementation of safety laws in Europe.

Another example is slurry. The club also visited a dairy farm—actually, it was a pig farm, but it is the same thing. Well, it is not quite the same thing but they both produce large amounts of slurry and have the same number of legs. The slurry was pouring under the door and into the fields and little effort was being made to control it. The club members also visited a duck paté processing establishment. The duck liver paté producer was cutting up the carcases of the ducks in the back kitchen of the farmhouse. The wellington boots had been thrown in the corner and the dog was waiting under the table for some tasty morsels to drop from the table. Things are not done in that way in this country. Other member states do not implement regulations in the strict way that we do.

Mr. Gummer: I wonder whether my hon. Friend agrees with me that one of the important sections of the Maastricht treaty is designed precisely to deal with this problem. It will enable the European Court to fine countries that do not enforce the regulations for which they have voted. This is another example of the Maastricht treaty containing some important provisions that will serve to level the playing field.

Mr. Marland: I was about to ask my right hon. Friend whether he would make that one of the priorities of the United Kingdom's presidency. We must ensure that regulations are enforced elsewhere. The problem spreads much more widely than the rather light-hearted examples that I have given. It extends to slaughterhouses and to veterinary inspection, and it is causing considerable difficulty in the United Kingdom. It leads to unfair competition.

The farmers to whom I have spoken are delighted that we have managed to resist modulation and that the co-responsibility levy on milk is to be dropped. The levy never did any good and it would never have done any good. Again, my right hon. Friend has done a first-class job. I am delighted that he resisted the demands that were made by Italy. It was outrageous that the Italians, who had never implemented the quota, sought more quota. A first-class move was made to prevent that from happening.

As for the future of the milk marketing boards, I am glad that my right hon. Friend is to go to Europe with representatives of the boards, to seek to promote their proposals for new approaches and that he has helped the board to get them accepted.

Large retailers, which are supplied with great quantities of milk, are anxious that during the transitional period —the introduction of new ways—a continuity of supply should be available to them. They would obviously like to have 100 per cent., but they would be happy to settle for 75 per cent. of existing usage. It does not seem to be that unreasonable that there should be some continuity to see them through the early stages. Milk quotas for farmers were based on existing production and it would be helpful for milk users if the same consideration were given to them.

Many small producers who are processing their own milk have responded to our exhortations to add value to what they are producing. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that those who do add value to their own milk by producing local yoghurt and locally made cheeses, for example, can continue to develop their stake in the milk-processing business?

With others, I warmly welcome the environmental aspects of the package. I like my right hon. Friend's plans for extensification, for non-rotational set-aside and for setting out a legal basis for long-term set-aside. The support for organic farming is widely welcomed, as is the power to include access provision in environmental schemes, which I think will be extremely popular with the public and will go down well. It will stand the farmers in good stead as well.

It is right that my right hon. Friend should describe himself as the greenest Minister in Europe, for that he surely is. As other Ministers bluster he gets on and does something positive. Many of the environment schemes are very much to his credit. As he is a green and environment-conscious Minister, I ask him not to be swayed by the argument that corbies should be controlled on a seasonal basis. The tremendous increase in the number of magpies and rooks is doing our wildlife a great deal of damage.

Another problem—I do not think that it is yet a European issue that involves considerable damage to the environment—is the activity of the hippies or, as they call themselves, new-age travellers. We in the agriculture community call them new-age pests. Events at Castlemorton common highlighted the problem for all to see. There are many small groups of hippies moving around throughout the country, and once they get on to land they are the very devil to move. They are well aware of the regulations that deal with squatting illegally on other people's land. As long as they have fewer than 13 vehicles, they can stay. As I have said, it is extremely difficult to move them. They do a great deal of damage; they have maurauding dogs that kill sheep they cut down trees and they interfere with water supplies. When they go, they leave a terrible mess, to say nothing of the costs to the police in controlling them.

We have had a great deal of trouble with hippies in Gloucestershire. I pay tribute to the Gloucestershire police, whose vigilance has done much to rid Gloucestershire of the hippies, at least for the time being. We need much closer cross-county border co-operation to keep such people on the move. I hope that my right hon. Friend will bear that in mind.

Another aspect to consider is the easy way in which hippies get social security payments—because they are certainly surviving on them. They are able to get them wherever they stop. The hippies in our woods said that they could not leave until Thursday because that was when they were paid. Stupidly, I thought that they were actually working somewhere, perhaps picking fruit. I thought that they were getting paid for the work that they were doing.

Mr. Gill: Does my hon. Friend know that those people also get paid for their fictitious dogs?

Mr. Marland: I did not know that they were paid for their fictitious dogs, but single mothers certainly get paid for their children. That is a growth industry in welfare payments.

One difficulty is that when we do get rid of those people, landowners then block all the entrances to their land. All of the woods on the top of the Cotswolds have hundreds of tonnes of quarry waste dumped in their access routes to keep out the hippies. That denies access to ordinary, God-fearing picnickers and others who want to walk in the woods. They have to scramble over what looks like the Himalayas in some areas if they want access to the woods. I hope that my hon. Friend will take note of that problem and, together with the Secretary of State for Social Security, try to do something about it. That would be a great help.

This is one of the best packages that we have had from Brussels for many years. My right hon. Friend has achieved almost the impossible. However, a Minister's work is never done and the playing field is still not level. I do not want to sound ungrateful, but we should remember the lack of guards on machines where duck paté is produced in France. I hope that it will be a priority of our presidency to ensure that other member states fall into line with the scrupulous way that we obey the law.

1.16 pm

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): I am grateful to be called to speak, Madam Speaker, especially as I missed a little of the middle part of the debate. I had no alternative but to disappear for a while. I am glad to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland), who always speaks with such authority on these occasions. He is a farmer, so he knows exactly what he is talking about. I sympathise with his point about a level playing field, although I am not sure that French paté

would taste quite the same without the flavour of Wellington boots and farm dogs. I am not one of those who want to sterilise everything in sight.

It would be churlish of me not to congratulate my right hon. Friend and his team on their great efforts in securing the CAP reform package. I genuinely congratulate them because I know the sort of battle that they have had. However, it is important to put the recent decisions in context. My right hon. Friend related what he had succeeded in doing—he had fought this, stopped that; it has been very much a war of attrition. He also mentioned tobacco, although one wonders what that has to do directly with our country. He referred to the problem of milk production in Italy and Spain and said that we do not know precisely how much milk they produce. That is a sample of just some of the problems, and I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend for his efforts in dealing with them.

European agriculture is now in a nonsensical straitjacket. It becomes progressively tighter and every so often the Ministers meet to tighten the straps or to loosen them—but the patient, agriculture, is no better off and a solution is no closer. The fundamental difficulties that face the CAP are no different from those that face the European Community as a whole. Many different nations with different cultures, climate and working practices are working within a rigid framework, and in my view that will never work satisfactorily.

Just as the whole future of the European Community is now being questioned, it is time to query not just the structure of the CAP but its very existence. The Minister has little power over his industry on behalf of the farmers. I am sad about that because it is a very serious position. If we are not careful, other Ministers will find themselves in the same position. My constituents want us to pursue a simple common market—a free trade area. That is a big enough task in itself. Agriculture Ministers ought to consider ways of giving themselves back the power to administer agriculture in their own countries, and devise sensible rules for trade between countries and for environmental protection.

The co-responsibility levy on cereals is to go. We all shout hooray and say that that is very welcome—but it was a crazy idea from the beginning. I understand that stabilisers are also to be abolished; yet only a year or two ago, it was said that they would solve all our problems. What a colossal waste of time, effort and money. Cereal farmers in my constituency will receive lower prices but incur higher costs. What a long-term prospect that is for them. They have little room for diversification into other agricultural enterprises because of the ever-tightening system of quotas and restrictions. The whole picture is restrictive, arbitrary, anti-enterprise and depressing for the farmers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West mentioned poultry inspection. My hon. Friend the Minister of State is well aware of the difficulties that confront the poultry-processing industry because of the ridiculous levels of inspection that it has to tolerate. The cost to the industry since 1990 is estimated at £85 million.

A minor example of European interference in British farming is the decision to abolish dipping for sheep scab. One can make a case for that, but I am convinced that if we were not in Europe, we would continue that practice.

As one who takes an interest in environmental issues, I find it difficult to be very enthusiastic about the environmental measures in the package. That may sound churlish, but the best way to protect our countryside is to encourage a healthy and thriving agricultural industry, and to let it get on with it. I do not believe that artificial incentives will prove to be the right way.

The soundest advice that one can give to anyone who digs themselves into a hole is to stop digging. The Ministers of the Twelve should stop digging for a while and, in good old agricultural fashion, lean on their spades and think the whole thing through again. I am certain that they would conclude that the CAP is madness and must be abandoned.

Any European expert will say two things about the CAP. With the first breath he will say that it is a total nonsense, and with the second that it is the linchpin on the entire Community. There we have it. The whole edifice is built on a system that is generally acknowledged to be a farce.

For the sake of our farmers, we must seriously consider repatriating ministerial power and responsibility, establish clear rules for trade in agricultural products within the Community and take steps to protect the environment. We must seriously consider also abandoning the straitjacket of the CAP, which gives the Community a bad name. Historians may view it as the silliest experiment ever undertaken by politicians. If we are not careful, they may take the same view of the entire European Community.

1.23 pm

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): I am grateful for this opportunity to make my maiden speech in a debate on agriculture. I am well aware that my predecessor, Sir Robin Maxwell-Hyslop, robustly defended all those who worked in agriculture in Tiverton. I hope to follow in that tradition as enthusiastically as he did.

Sir Robin represented Tiverton for more than 32 years. I know that he was well regarded and respected by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House for his knowledge of its procedure. I do not intend to emulate his expertise, although I am aware of the importance of making oneself aware of parliamentary procedures. When Sir Robin raised a point of order in the House he commanded the respect both of the occupant of the Chair and of hon. Members on both sides of the House—not least in 1976, when he challenged the then Labour Government's Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Bill, a measure to nationalise many private companies, and proved it to be a hybrid Bill.

The Tiverton constituency covers some 650 sq miles. It contains five small towns and more than 90 small parishes. People live in small villages and hamlets in sparsely populated areas. Many hon. Members represent constituencies in which the needs of the urban voter are very much to the fore. I understand the needs of inner cities and urban areas, and their requirements must be voiced in a whole range of debates, but it is those who live and seek their income in rural areas about whom I am naturally most concerned.

I join in welcoming the reforms of the CAP that my right hon. Friend the Minister has succeeded in securing; he has rightly gained respect for the part that he has played. It has been said that the agreement is just a framework, but it is surely with a framework that we must start. My right hon. Friend has acknowledged that much

[Mrs. Angela Browning]

detail remains to be worked out. I am sure that many of the arguments will be listened to when we come down to the detail.

I shall refer to some points of detail that particularly affect the farming community in Tiverton. We warmly welcome the announcement of headage limits, which are of great benefit to sheep farmers, particularly in my constituency, although sheep are reared not only in the uplands but in the lowlands. I hope that my right hon. Friend will take into account, particularly in considering the system of quotas for ewes, all the lessons to be learnt from the introduction of milk quotas in 1984. I hope that he will take them into account, particularly in terms of the leasing and transfer of quota and the problems encountered where quotas are attached to land, of which he is well aware.

Much has been made of the fact that agriculture is an industry. One of the main difficulties that farmers in my constituency have experienced in the past few years is that they have not been able to plan for the future. Farms are businesses and they need to be able to plan and to make long-term projections. They must invest money, diversify or change their business on a structured rather than an ad hoc basis, not least because of the lead time needed to change or diversify.

Family farms in Devon have experienced problems. I welcome the Budget announcement of the abolition of inheritance tax. My farmers have experienced great difficulties. Where a son or daughter is looking to take over from his or her parents, both families may not be able to derive sufficient income from the one farm. If the son or daughter wants to pursue that career, he or she has no option but to look for alternative premises or land pending the succession. For some time, there have been exceptions to inheritance tax law which have been helpful to farmers, but the abolition of the tax will help us to maintain the continuity of what has been a real family business in the county of Devon for generations.

I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Minister has returned to the Chamber. He has visited the county of Devon, not least last year when I was delighted to accompany him at a somewhat robust meeting of the National Farmers Union. Having read the comments of the NFU, the Country Landowners Association and the Tenant Farmers Association, I invite my right hon. Friend to return soon to the county of Devon. I wish that he had been with me a few weeks ago at the Devon county show when the farming community spoke favourably of my right hon. Friend's proposals and paid a personal tribute to him. That is not an experience which my right hon. Friend has often enjoyed in the county of Devon, so I ask him please to return as soon as possible and avail himself at first hand of those accolades.

I have already referred to the difference in the position of those who dwell in truly rural areas and those who live in urban areas. The difference applies not just to those involved in agriculture, food processing or the industries associated with farming. It affects everyone living in a rural area. The needs of rural communities may not be so large as those of urban communities, but the need for adequate health and social services support must be satisfied.

As this is a maiden speech, I ask for the indulgence of the House in widening the debate and putting on record my interest in and my concern for a group of extremely vulnerable people, both urban and rural. I refer to people suffering from permanent disabilities—physical difficulties, learning difficulties and mental handicap. I hope that while I am Member of Parliament for the Tiverton constituency there will be an improvement in the quality of life enjoyed by that group of people and a clearer understanding of their needs and the difficulties that they face. I hope that those needs will be addressed in future legislation.

1.31 pm

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me at this particular time. It is a great joy to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) after her able and delightful maiden speech. All of us who had the pleasure of serving with her predecessor, Sir Robin Maxwell-Hyslop, will recognise the generosity of her tribute to him and will also note that he has handed over to her a constituency which has a fond regard for any Member of Parliament who takes under his or her wing the welfare of agriculture. I am certain that Tiverton will be well served for a long time as a consequence of its sensible decision first to adopt and then to select such a Member of Parliament. We look forward to hearing her speak again. Agriculture obviously has a very good friend in the House.

The tributes paid to my right hon. Friend the Minister are well deserved. He has clearly achieved for the first time support for efficient agriculture rather than just support for the production of agricultural products. May I also draw the attention of the House to the part played by my right hon. Friend's sidekick, the Minister of State. I am glad that the Minister of State is not here so that I can spare him his blushes. I know that he will return. Every Minister in charge of a Department or Ministry needs an able Minister of State at his right hand during negotiations. It is the technique of playing box and cox in the negotiations that leads to so much success. I am glad that my right hon. Friend and his team have been so palpably successful in using the opportunities and techniques available to them in the recent successful negotiations. It is rare for universal acclaim to be accorded to the outcome of Council of Ministers negotiations on CAP price fixing and reform. Congratulations are, therefore, in order.

I should like to extend those thanks and congratulations to the wider Commonwealth. At gatherings of Commonwealth parliamentarians, it is rare for reference not to be made by parliamentarians from the third world and the developing countries to the way in which the CAP and worldwide agriculture subsidies have undermined their produce. My right hon. Friend the Minister referred to the sale of Belgian oil in Cameroon, but the Malaysians are worried about what has happened to their palm oil. That is just one example of many that are given. It will be a pleasure to be able to point to this agreement as the watershed in Community and worldwide agriculture which began to erode the destruction of the economies of third world and developing countries.

A number of points have been brushed over in the debate. One that has come to light in Herefordshire is the structure of agriculture, of the countryside and of the

people in it. The average age of our farming community is close to the Community average of about 55. Over the years, the size of agricultural holdings has increased to produce the income necessary for the family. Fewer people are directly employed on the land, fewer people are involved and there is less room for two families to be involved in one holding. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton said, with an aging population there is no room for the next generation to join the enterprise until they are too old. There is nothing for that generation to do. It is important, therefore, to address the ability of the 55-plus group to be able to retire, not only to clear the way for the new generation to come into agriculture but to enable flexibility of thought in the agriculture process. With these changes and the new stresses that are being put on agriculture, we are asking old dogs to learn new tricks when we need new dogs to learn new tricks so as to adapt to conditions in the industry. I urge my right hon. Friend the Minister to reconsider his position on early retirement opportunities, as I believe that early retirement can be of great benefit to certain aspects of agriculture, not least in my part of the world where we have many owner-drivers operating comparatively small holdings.

My right hon. Friend the Minister referred to the beef and sheepmeat industries. I wish to draw his attention to the question of stocking densities. Young farmers who seek to establish comparatively small holdings on the high ground in the west of my constituency bring in grazing. The question is to whom the acreage accrues in assessing the stocking density. It is important that we clarify this, because I do not want the practice of buying in grazing, and thereby being able to generate a holding, to be nailed by a rigid definition of who owns the stocking density ability in the assessment for the special premium.

In respect of the special beef premium, can it be borne in mind that grass-fed animals do not benefit from reductions in the price of cereals? My right hon. Friend the Minister said that the level of the suckler cow premium and the special beef premium is set accordingly.

I should like him to undertake to review carefully the level at which the national top-up is set so that it does not discriminate against grass-fed animals. That is important to the livestock sector in my constituency. I am proud to be wearing today the tie of the Hereford herd book—the only tie which wholly defines a constituency. The beef of the Hereford suckler herd is very important.

What will my right hon. Friend have on his agenda for the next six months during his presidency of the Council of Ministers? He made no specific reference to that so I shall make some suggestions. The first was touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland), who spoke about a level playing field. The playing field may well be more level, but there are still some big bumps in it.

The differential enforcement of legislation is very important. The Maastricht treaty has dimensions that allow for the enforcement of legislation. We must recognise that that is a question for another day, but in the meantime we must put in place what my people call pan-European policing of the regulations so that we can be confident that they are being implemented.

I have seen chicken processing plants in Holland—that paragon of hygienic virtue—where operators were smoking and putting their cigarettes on the counter. I have seen unguarded machinery and things that would not be tolerated in the Sun Valley Poultry plant in Hereford. Some of my constituents mentioned a visit to a dairy unit by an Irish farmer. The farmer was shown around and, obviously, the finer points escaped his attention because at the end of his visit—I must paraphrase slightly—he turned to his hosts and asked, "Where is the slurry stream?" How many farmers in Ireland are constrained by the pollution controls that we have rightly introduced and which are reinforced by the National Rivers Authority?

Another problem that must be tackled is the use of technical methods for discrimination. We have an aphid specific to our hops, on which we have to use an organophosphate drench as a systemic killer. My hop producers complain that the use of that particular pesticide is used as a means of barring Herefordshire hops from Germany even though the United States uses the same technique. It is an example of technical methods being used to create a barrier although the product is safe.

My penultimate point is to reinforce what has already been said about getting across the message about hours of work. In the agricultural industry, it is a nonsense to place an arbitrary limit on the number of hours one can work. Young people in the industry are angry: they do not want to be told when they have had enough—they want to be able to use the weather, their ability and their physique to get on with the job and to earn money when they can. The implications of that must be understood and we must stop any nonsense.

Finally, we must put in place now the system that will look to the future. During debates on reforms of the CAP, one always gets the feeling that once we arrive at a deal, everyone heaves a deep sigh of relief and forgets about it and the political will to resolve difficulties falls away until political pressure builds and something must be done.

Our present deal takes us only as far as 1996. If Oliver Walston is considering the rotation of his crops, so are other people. In terms of the planned rotation of crops, 1996 is already here. We must know what will happen beyond 1996. How are we to plan for the future? It would be nice to know what mechanism will be put in place to look beyond that date. How can we have confidence that those issues are being tackled and monitored all the time? If my right hon. Friend can achieve that during his presidency he will have served it well.

On 10 April I received a message from my farming constituents which said, tersely,

"Ensure Gummer continues as Minister of Agriculture. We need him for CAP and GATT review."

It is with some delight and relief that my unspoken wish and their written wish has been complied with.

1.44 pm

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): Thank you Madam Deputy Speaker for giving me the opportunity to convey a few words from my constituents to my right hon. Friend the Minister.

The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) lived up to his reputation in the agricultural community, in his entertaining performance at the beginning of the debate, when he regretted that the debate was taking place today. I note from the *Official Report* that on 22 May he pressed the Minister for an early debate. The hon. Gentleman's consistency is relevant in that he also said on that day that the Minister had sold out the upland farmer. I do not know how many upland farmers there are in South Shields, but there are an awful lot in Brecon and Radnor.

[Mr. Jonathan Evans]

In this limited time I can tell my right hon. Friend that the National Farmers Union county branches in Brecon and Radnor have held a meeting since 22 May, at which they considered the details of his announcement. They asked me to congratulate my right hon. Friend, in the most public way that I can, on the measure of his achievement in the negotiations.

The hon. Member for South Shields may well pray in aid the observations of the Country Landowners Association—an interesting juxtaposition for the Labour party, if the House will allow me to say so. Within my constituency the NFU and tenant farmers are delighted about the quota arrangements, which ensure that quota goes to the producer rather than being tied to the land, although the arrangement has been given less of a welcome by the CLA.

The special achievement in my right hon. Friend's pocket for my farmers is what he managed to do about headage payments for sheep producers. That is a major achievement and has been recognised as such by hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber during the debate. Perhaps the hon. Member for South Shields should therefore withdraw the remarks that he made on 22 May.

One thing that my right hon. Friend has definitely not done is to sell out the upland farmers of Britain. On the contrary, he has managed to develop support methods which will be even more beneficial to them. The extensification arrangements contained in the reform package are widely welcomed by my constituency, as are the arrangements that enable environmentally sensitive areas—this is difficult to pronounce—which the Minister has been in the forefront of developing, to be developed on a Community-wide basis.

It is a measure of my right hon. Friend's success that, coincidentally, two or three days before the campaign started my predecessor, Mr. Richard Livsey, wrote to his constituents telling them that he had visited Mr. MacSharry to put the local farmers' case. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Tyler) was with him. The Government have been criticised about that and in Wales it is said that the Secretary of State for Wales ought to be there to fight regularly for local farmers. The spokesmen took it upon themselves to speak to Mr. MacSharry and to put the case.

All my constituents were told by Mr. Livsey:

"John Gummer has criticised me for raising this, but the farmers' union had rightly asked me to raise the subject with the Commissioner. But Mr. MacSharry will still not be moved on the ewe premium thresholds."

Two other people present on that occasion were two former agricultural spokesmen for the Liberal Democrats. I was unaware that the current spokesman, the hon. Member for Cornwall, North was present as well. They were unable to persuade Mr. MacSharry to move his position, but my right hon. Friend the Minister has been able to do so. He has the congratulations of all my farming constituents and all my hon. Friends on the scale of his achievement.

1.50 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. This is my first opportunity to speak in the House while you are in the Chair. I welcome you to the Chair.

This is an extremely important debate. I pay tribute to the three maiden speakers this morning—the hon. Members for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson), for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) and for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning). Their speeches were extremely good and I am sure that we shall hear those hon. Members make many more speeches here. They have chosen to make their maiden speeches in this important debate on the reform of the common agricultural policy.

I had many dealings with the predecessor of the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury, who was, to say the least, a character. I served with him on many Committees. He was virtually a chain smoker and he used to have to go out to smoke. I was a smoker at the time and I used to talk to him. The hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury said that his predecessor had changed direction on many policies. I said to Nicholas Ridley that it was a pity that he made certain changes and that I wished that he had concentrated on his painting instead because he was a very good artist. I should have preferred some of the changes that took place as a result of his changes in direction not to have taken place. I do not say that unkindly, although I am sure that many of my hon. Friends agree with me. I am glad that those three hon. Members have had the opportunity to make their speeches. We all know how important it is to get one's maiden speech out of the way.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) and for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson), who also spoke in the debate. The hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) derided Opposition speeches in the debate, saying that we were the only people who criticised what the Government had negotiated. I hope that he will study *Hansard*. If he reads his hon. Friend's speeches, he will find that few gave unqualified support to what has been negotiated and that several were critical of the Government.

When the result of the election in the constituency of the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) was given on election night, it was said that he was not a typical Tory and that he was something of a maverick. We know that he is. He raised issues of great importance. Although milk quotas have not been negotiated, they raise questions about what will happen. The hon. Gentleman said that he hoped that the Minister meant that the milk quotas would not be renegotiated and reduced later this year. I believe that it is possible that, in the not-too-distant future, the Minister will tell us about a wholly unacceptable reduction —albeit small in percentage terms. The hon. Member for Macclesfield said that we have insufficient capacity at present and that we are importing too much high value-added dairy produce. That is nonsensical. Any further reduction of this country's milk quota would only worsen the position.

The hon. Gentleman then referred to the Milk Marketing Board. Although I do not want to be side-tracked by that, I believe that he rightly delivered the Minister a shot across the bows by warning that the proposed changes to the board's structure should be debated and need to be considered in the interests not only of those involved in the milk and dairy industry, but of consumers. The hon. Gentleman was right to warn the Minister. He showed that Conservative as well as Labour Members wish to examine the issue, which is a good thing.

The hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) is a former Minister and we are glad to see him back in the House. However, I prefer to see him on the Back Benches than in the position that he previously occupied. He highlighted some of the problems caused by the bureaucracy and monitoring of set-aside and the fact that the scheme can be abused and result in fraud. The hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury also referred to the problems of ploughing and to what is done with set-aside land. He was right to draw attention to the question marks that hang over the use of such land.

The speech of the hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) went to what I consider to be the kernel of the debate. I share many of his concerns. We have been trying to renegotiate the CAP, which has been held together with sticky tape and plaster for years. We must consider whether the CAP has worked in relation to article 39(1) of the treaty of Rome and whether the latest attempt at reform will meet the challenges of the years ahead. The hon. Gentleman was right to say that it has not met either the short-term or long-term challenges. The enlargement of the European Community and the unification of Germany have created problems that we had not previously imagined. The agreements on German trade could open the floodgates, and the entry of Poland and other countries into the EC will pose challenges that the renegotiated package will be unable to overcome. The hon. Gentleman was right to express his worries.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) referred to the fact that Labour Members did not want this debate on a Friday. The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) underlined why my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) was unhappy with the timing of the debate, because he said that he would have to return immediately to his constituency after making his speech. The evidence will show that more Labour Members represent constituencies that are further away from London than those held by Conservative Members. Therefore, if a debate is held on a Friday, many of my hon. Friends have to leave before its conclusion. For that reason, we were unhappy with the decision to hold this important debate on a Friday.

The debate is taking place while the Earth summit is being held in Rio. The former Prime Minister described it as a "funny old world". We are debating a system that will take out of production 15 per cent. of cereal land in Europe at a time when people are starving. It is a funny old world when Europe is prepared, because of cereal surplus, to pay farmers not to produce rather than to see that food sent to those parts of the world where people are starving. The coincidence of those debates focuses attention on that problem. I know that it is not as simple as it appears, but it is important that this country and Europe pay much more attention to that problem.

In his statement on 22 May the Minister gave little information, was self-congratulatory, and was contratulated by his hon. Friends. Today he said that he had not prepared a shopping list for the negotiations because it was not good policy to reveal the bottom line. As a former shop steward who had to engage in negotiations, I understand that *[Laughter.]* Conservative Members laugh. We do not know what the Minister set out to achieve and therefore have no benchmark upon which to decide how he has done. He could say that he has achieved everything that he set out to achieve and no hon. Member could challenge him. We know only what the Minister chooses to tell us. Do we judge the list in the way suggested by the hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord), against the original concepts and objectives of the CAP, or do we judge it on price?

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who is to reply to the debate, replied to a question this week from my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew), who asked what effect the agreement would have on prices. The Minister said:

> "It is not possible to give precise estimates. The reform processes will be spread over a number of years, and during this period retail food prices will be affected by a number of factors. However, at the end of the reform period the retail food price index could be"—

he did not say that it will be—

> "some 2 per cent. lower on average than it would otherwise have been."—[*Official Report*, 8 June 1992; Vol. 209, c. *13*.]

That could mean anything: the Minister need not have bothered to answer. Therefore, we cannot judge the package by what the Minister said about prices.

The CAP will still consume 60 per cent. of the EC budget and there will still be massive bureaucracy and intervention. Is that realistic or sensible? If set-aside is to be regulated and operated sensibly, reasonably and feasibly, and be seen to be fair and to be doing what it sets out to do, bureaucracy will need to be increased. If it is not, the system will be wide open to abuse.

The Minister said that consumers would be £8 billion better off, but he did not say whether those savings would accrue to consumers in this country or to the Community as a whole. I think that they will apply to the Community as a whole, but the Minister deliberately did not say that, because he wants people to believe that only the United Kingdom will benefit. I agree with the hon. Member for Macclesfield that the savings are for the EC as a whole.

Mr. Gummer *indicated assent.*

Mr. Pike: The Minister admits that the savings will accrue to the EC as a whole. He deliberately left the matter open to misinterpretation, hoping that the press might think that the savings benefited only this country.

The Minister was helpful on interventions about sheep quotas and sensitive areas. It is crucial to determine the areas that are to be regarded as sensitive. Sugar is not mentioned in the package and we need to hear more about that. Some Conservative Members have said that the NFU welcomed the package. On 21 May the NFU said that CAP reform was,

> "an improvement but still severe."

That is not unqualified approval. On 10 June it said:

> "Government must sort out reform details quickly. The Government is being urged to sort out the detailed conditions of the EC's new set-aside requirements as quickly as possible. This is essential if producers are to be able to adapt their farming arrangements in time to meet the requirements of the new rules . . ."

Again, it raises doubts and questions. In a letter on 29 May, the NFU said:

> "the prospects for already depressed United Kingdom farm incomes are negative. The implications for individual farmers vary according to the relevant farm commodities, and the structure and character of their farm businesses. The actual impact on United Kingdom farming in general will take some time to assess as vital details . . . have yet to be settled."

The NFU is not giving unqualified support. It is asking many questions that need to be answered. I know that the Minister said that this will be looked at, but these are legitimate queries.

[Mr. Pike]

On 24 May *The Sunday Times*—not a Labour supporter——

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): No, it is not.

Mr. Pike: I am glad that we agree about that. The paper said:

"The price reductions agreed last week, will, according to officials, result in an overall reduction in food prices of a paltry 2 per cent. at the end of the three years . . . The £26 billion a year currently spent of the CAP will be swelled by at least £3 billion by the new income support for farmers. Only in four or five years is the overall budget expected to fall. Maybe, maybe not. We all know what happens to five year plans."

The Sunday Times also said:

"Farm spending reforms agreed by the European Community last week have been condemned by the EC's own spending watchdogs as a recipe for fraud"—

that underlines the problem—

"and a bureaucratic nightmare. In an unpublished report obtained by the *Sunday Times*, the EC court of auditors attacks the plan to switch from farm price subsidies to higher direct payments to 9 million farmers."

These issues must still be resolved.

There remain problems that have not been satisfactorily considered. Small farmers are still discriminated against by these reforms, whatever the Minister has said. Farmers are not satisfied with the reforms, which increase the bureaucracy of the CAP and create new difficulties. The Country Landowners Association believes that, although the reforms assist farmers in the arable sector, those in the livestock sector are discriminated against. Development of efficient livestock farmers is inhibited and the reforms will result in a decrease in normal incomes, especially for beef farmers. They are given the lowest level of support and, although it is claimed that they will benefit from reduced cereal feed prices, many farmers graze their herds of pasture land and so receive no benefit. Many hon. Members have made that important point today because if the reforms do not benefit these farmers, there will be no effect on the price of their product.

The Country Landowners Association also says that it believes that the new production controls restrict the flexibility and development of the farmer and that

"they are a substitute for fundamental economic reform."

The Food and Drink Federation is concerned that too much emphasis has been placed on production control rather than on reducing prices, which creates a lack of security in farming. It does not think that the reforms are sufficiently balanced and comprehensive. The Milk Marketing Board has expressed its opposition and concern.

The Minister said that if Spain agreed to cut milk production by 800,000 tonnes, it would get an increase of 500,000 tonnes. What exactly did he mean by that? Greece will have an increase.

The Country Landowners Association also believes that the reforms could affect the relationship between landowners and tenants. There is great concern about tenants in the negotiation of rents. There are also fears about jobs in the industry. One of the factors that we must take into account is the total package. Unemployment has implications for the net effect of the reforms on the economy of the nation as a whole.

The Tenant Farmers Association states:

"paid labour is likely to be shed from all farms and machinery replacement deferred or cancelled with the use of contractors or machinery rings."

That is another example of how unemployment will increase as a result of this package, with resulting effects on the economy.

A number of environmental issues need to be addressed. Although the RSPB welcomes certain aspects of the deal, it wants to know what steps the Minister will take to ensure that farmers who take advantage of the agri-environment package will be able to do so at the same eligibility for compensation payments as those who set aside land short term for periods of five years. I hope that the Minister can clarify that point.

We are anxious to see moves that will improve the environment, but the Council for the Protection of Rural England believes that the CAP budget for this is insufficient to produce any real benefits. The Minister has stated in the past that the Commission officially confirmed that the cost of reform of the CAP could be met within the agriculture guidelines as presently constituted. There is still, however, an increase in costs. The NFU believes that changes must be made to ensure that the reforms are financially and administratively sustainable. I do not believe that that can be said of the package that we are discussing.

Some Conservative Members have said that they would like to hear about the Labour party's policies on these issues. I should love to be replying from the Government Front Bench and setting out a Labour Government's policies. Once again, the Government have negotiated a package that will not last, even in the short term. It will clearly fail in the long term and it will not be good for consumers. Similarly, it is not good for Britain or for the farmers.

2.10 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): We have had the pleasure today of hearing three outstanding maiden speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning), for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) and for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown). They paid genuine and moving tributes to their predecessors and gave eloquent descriptions of their constituencies. It is clear that already they have established the sort of umbilical cord that Members develop with their constituencies. All three of my hon. Friends showed a clear perception of the problems that agriculture faces, and the farmers in their constituencies now know that they are represented by extremely worthy advocates.

I have detected a common thread between Hexham and Cirencester and Tewkesbury. Both constituencies have magnificent abbey churches. Hexham's first church was built by St. Wilfred, the patron saint of Ripon cathedral, in the 9th century. It was St. Wilfred, of course, who ensured that the United Kingdom would pursue the continental forms of christianity. The church was sacked in 876 by the Danes. I hope that that does not jar with any sentiments recently expressed in the House.

Both Hexham and Cirencester and Tewkesbury saw battles in the wars of the roses, in 1464 and 1471 respectively. I am happy to inform the House that the Yorkists won in both cases.

Mr. Gill: But not in the end.

Mr. Curry: My hon. Friend will recall that in the end there was a marriage between the House of York and the House of Lancaster, which produced the Tudors. I do not wish to draw any extrapolations to current circumstances, but it would indicate that jaw, jaw is better than war, war, even in dynastic politics.

The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) made a paralysingly unconvincing start to his speech. To say that he shuddered to a halt would be to give a misleading impression of the dynanism of his remarks. The hon. Gentleman appeared to suffer from three problems: he did not understand the question, he did not understand the answer, and he did not understand the distinction between the two. Relatively recently he said:

"Whether the Minister likes it or not . . . it is probably that MacSharry's notions will be accepted."

He then said:

"the Minister, almost certainly . . . will lose the battle for our interests."

Interestingly, he added:

"I hope I am wrong."—[*Official Report*, 4 December 1991; Vol. 200, c. 295-303.]

That is one of the few aspirations that the hon. Gentleman has a reasonable chance of achieving.

The hon. Member for South Shields talked about Mr. Oliver Walston's intentions. Mr. Walston is a neighbour of mine and an extremely efficient farmer. He has said that he will set aside the protein and the oilseed side of his farm and continue to grow cereals. It is probable that he will do so in the first year, for that would be the sensible course. Cereals will be affected only by a 3 per cent. stabiliser cut. Mr. Walston will find that over three years the price of cereals will reduce. Therefore, the relative advantage of cereals compared to other crops will diminish. At the same time it is true that the Council retains the option of increasing the percentages required under set-aside. If what the hon. Member for South Shields presented to the House were to become a general phenomenon—I do not think that it will, because of the economics—there is a mechanism that will be able to correct it. I would not wish to suggest that Mr. Walston could be described as a typical farmer. I do not think that he would be accepted as that, even in Cambridgeshire, however efficient he may be.

I shall make a couple of general points and then refer to the specific points raised in the debate. The MacSharry proposals were enormously complicated, and at times the negotiations became so impenetrable that my right hon. Friend and I felt that we might even have strayed into a shadow Cabinet election campaign. Those proposals were not the way we would necessarily have gone, had we been producing them. We would not have started from the premise from which Mr. MacSharry started. His fundamental thrust is towards production control and a large number of European Ministers like that thrust because it would limit the quantity while guaranteeing incomes. Controls apply to cereals, oil seeds, sugar, milk, sheep and beef in one form or another.

Sensible farmers in the United Kingdom, who wish to operate in as free a market as is compatible with a sensible return, the maintenance of the countryside and other environmental considerations, would prefer not to find themselves subjected to such controls. However, it is also true that there is a fundamental shift in the package towards the marketplace. That takes the form of a cut in the cereal price. That is the keystone in the reform package because in a sense all the other elements hinge on that cut in the cereal price. Of course, there are also significant cuts in intervention.

I attribute to Opposition Members the same concern for British interests that Conservative Members feel, so I am sure that they agree that the package is a more rational and sensible way to proceed. It is a political and complex outline agreement. Like everybody else, I should have liked to have at my fingertips every jot, comma and dash of the details, and we undertake to put those before the House as soon as possible. We have no interest in prolonging uncertainty. The working groups are working hard on producing the detailed regulations. They must transit through the Council, but we undertake that they will be made avilable in a comprehensible form as rapidly as possible. We accept that farmers have to take decisions.

It is also a fundamental fact that the reforms are not discriminatory against the United Kingdom in the way that the original proposals were. We must not underestimate the pressure for the original proposals, including within the Council of Ministers. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) has been in the European Parliament with me, so he knows the pressures for discriminating in favour of the small farmer. There is a sense that somehow the small farmer has a higher moral virtue than the large farmer. We cannot bat away such pressures without a great deal of effort. Underpinning the reforms is a new awareness of the importance of environmental policies. The hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Tyler) addressed most of his remarks to the need for an environmental policy. There is, for example, the move towards more restrictive stocking densities and towards a permanent set-aside, which is so important to the United Kingdom, and, as my right hon. Friend said, towards the unhappily named agri-environment package on which the United Kingdom is working. We have to produce the plan for that within a year. My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham and others said that that was especially important.

During the negotiations, at the back of our minds was the importance of GATT. It is unfortunate that, over the past couple of years, there has not been a sufficiently wide awareness of the costs of not having GATT. There has been a feeling of, "It would be nice if we could get it", but no realisation of the fact that it would be a real pain if we did not get it. The moves on CAP reform, notably the price cuts in the cereal sector, bring the Community to a stage where it can meet the reasonable requirements and hopes of the United States in the volume of exports.

As my right hon. Friend said, the Community has moved significantly and the United States should respond to those proposals. We have a strong vested interest in achieving a GATT agreement that goes way beyond agriculture. We all accept that a GATT agreement without agriculture would not be acceptable.

The hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), who has probably left for his constituency, drew attention to the transferability of the sheep quotas in the less-favoured areas. We will clearly define those areas. I accept that we shall have to do some ring fencing. The purpose of the negotiation was to prevent a migration of sheep production from less-favoured areas. My own constituency is a significantly less-favoured area. We will define the areas as soon as possible, so that people know where they stand.

Mr. Gill: The hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) mentioned ewe lambs. Will my hon. Friend the Minister also look into that?

Mr. Curry: I was about to give precisely that assurance. There are restrictions on the eligible ewe—as the animal is elegantly referred to in the regulations—and we are considering the possibility of adjusting the sheep annual premium application and retention periods to address them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) raised three central issues—the future of milk quotas and the milk marketing boards, and farmers and supermarkets. There will be no cut in milk quotas this year, but there will be one in the butter price. We resisted the cut, for the reason argued by a number of right hon. and hon. Members—that the United Kingdom needs all the production that it can get because we want to develop value added products in our own marketplace.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The settlement will be warmly welcomed throughout Somerset—particularly because of the problems which confronted cheese producers this year as a result of a shortage of milk. Anything that my hon. Friend the Minister of State can do to help Somerset cheese producers will be much appreciated. I hope that he will consider that question.

Mr. Curry: I take my hon. Friend's point, which relates to the second issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield, about the future of milk marketing boards. My hon. Friend said that the changes were forced by the European Community, but I must categorically tell him that was not the case. The milk marketing boards themselves brought forward the proposals. We agree that that change is necessary because cheese makers and others who want to process value added products are finding themselves short of the raw material. Liberalisation of the marketplace is important to the producer and the consumer.

The debate has moved on and it is accepted that change will come. We are close to the point of giving clear shape to the proposals, which we will of course have to present to the House. At some stage, the milk marketing boards will have to be transformed into their successor organisations, when there will be a change in their statutory responsibilities. Those matters will need to receive the examination of the House—and the sooner that can be done, the better.

Farmers are in a sellers' market in the United Kingdom. Everyone says that we do not have enough milk. I represent a milk-producing constituency with a difficult terrain, so I am aware of the fear felt by some farmers that they will be left to drift. I believe that we shall be able to devise arrangements which will give them a better return for their product and better value from the marketplace. Once farmers overcome their legitimate concerns about the change, they will find the new arrangements well suited to their real needs.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for his assurances, which farmers will welcome. Can he give an assurance also that the remote dairy farm will still be able to rely on a milk marketing board to collect its product? That is essential in remote dairy farming areas.

Mr. Curry: The whole point about the change was that the milk marketing board should cease to exist as such. The board intends that its successor organisation should be a voluntary co-operative which all producers should be able to join, receiving from it the kind of support that they receive from the present board. We must be careful not to pretend that that voluntary co-operative is simply a milk marketing board in disguise. For one thing, it will not embrace Dairy Crest, which will be floated off as a separate entity. It is a significant change, but I think that the dairy industry will benefit from it.

It is a fairly familiar theme of farmers that they are exploited by supermarkets. The point of the marketing scheme that we have introduced is to try to bring farmers into the marketplace more, but if that is to be achieved, farmers must do two things. First, when they bring managers in to manage, they must let them get on with the job. Farmers are often reluctant to become vice-chairmen instead of chairmen and to allow managers to run enterprises of sufficient size to weigh in the marketplace. Secondly, farmers must produce what the market wants. The market will not go away. In some areas, there is still a tendency to say, "What people want is what I produce." That is not necessarily the case. Moreover, quite a lot of the lamb that comes off the English hills still does not meet the highest quality standards in the Community, so even in our most efficient sectors there is room for improvement.

The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) was on a similar theme, although he focused on the Welsh side of things. The Meat and Livestock Commission is active in promoting lamb, beef and other meat products abroad. I have assisted with some of its promotions and I know that it regards the Welsh quality mark and Welsh lamb as among the best. He will not be surprised to hear that I cannot allow him to get away with the assertion that Welsh lamb is better than Pennine lamb, but I agree that both are excellent.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: And Scottish lamb.

Mr. Curry: I do not want to start a fight. I am sure that it is all of equivalent quality. I am anxious that consumers abroad should have the advantage of access to all our lamb, all of which is a lot better than what they produce over there.

My hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) mentioned intervention funds. I heard what he said, and we shall clarify that point as soon as we can. As regards extensive farming, the move towards criteria governing acreage and grazing is a move in that direction. I also heard what my hon. Friend said about biofuels. We must ensure, however, that we do not replace one system dependent on subsidies with another system dependent on subsidies and that built into the arrangements is the sort of relation to the marketplace that we are seeking to achieve in the CAP as a whole.

I last encountered the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South in the European Parliament, and he has clearly brought with him some of the rigour that he showed in the budgetary committee of that Parliament. We should all like the United Kingdom to be able to produce more milk, but we cannot use the self-sufficiency argument for milk or for lamb, in which we are way over the self-sufficiency level.

Mr. Stevenson: Will the Minister concede that, although we in the United Kingdom may be self-sufficient in lamb, the EC as a whole is not?

Mr. Curry: The EC as a whole is not self-sufficient in lamb, but we have significant obligations to third countries, such as that to New Zealand under the voluntary restraints agreements which will eventually be consolidated into a GATT agreement. I am sure that we will all welcome that. We must also bear in mind that—in the coming years—we shall have to negotiate with eastern Europe. The whole House is anxious that we should provide the basis for political stability in eastern Europe. I would therefore hesitate to advocate that the Community should set as a goal self-sufficiency in all products, which would give many politicians the pretext to seek a greater degree of protectionism.

My hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) mentioned sugar and bananas. I do not know whether he was arguing that aid should replace access. If so, he will know that we have a difference on the matter. The British Government believe that access is important and that we should not replace access with aid to the developing countries. The hon. Gentleman will know that although bananas are perhaps not one of the hottest problems in agriculture at the moment, they are generating a great deal of debate.

I heard what my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) had to say.

My hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) and I have different perceptions of where the Community came from and where we wish it to go, but ours is an honourable and friendly disagreement which we can no doubt continue to debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) referred to the importance of the uplands, and I echo what he said. I, too, represent constituents who live in upland areas. My right hon. Friend has noted the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd). The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) made a splendid closing speech. I think that his side is clearly indicating that it wishes that he had made the opening speech for the Opposition.

We have achieved a good deal, but there will be further reforms. We shall have to change because all things have to change. Nevertheless, this is a significant step in the direction of a sane policy. We have taken this step with the help of—and to support—British agriculture, and the United Kingdom can be proud of what we have achieved. British farmers have obtained one element in the stability that they have long sought. They asked us to achieve that, and I believe that we have delivered. Although my right hon. Friend the Minister and I are modest about it, we do not wish to push modesty to extremes.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

EUROPEAN LEGISLATION

Ordered,

That Mrs. Jacqui Lait be discharged from the Select Committee on European Legislation and that Mr. Hartley Booth be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

William Gladstone School, Brent

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): I should make it clear at the start of the debate that this is one of the few occasions on which I have no criticism to make of the Government. Their role is to decide on recommendations made by councils about schools on the basis of the information that they have received. I believe that the Government have behaved fairly and honourably.

When I raised the issue of the William Gladstone community school at Prime Minister's Question Time before the election, the Prime Minister asked the then Secretary of State for Education to meet a deputation of local Conservative, Labour and Liberal councillors and parents. We were treated with absolute courtesy and given all the time that we wanted to put our case. The Government have behaved completely honourably. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of Brent council, under both parties.

Anyone in any area would be proud of the school. I visit it frequently. It is successful. It serves a very mixed community, in both class and racial terms. It has an enviable record and is intensely popular. Remarkable loyalty is shown to it by both staff and pupils. Remarkably, in the campaign to keep the school open we managed to enlist the support of Damian Green, the Conservative candidate at the last election who has been invited by the Prime Minister to join him as a policy adviser at No. 10. The Liberal candidate was also a member of the deputation that went to see the Secretary of State for Education. Putting party politics to one side, Damian Green argued with his Conservative colleagues on Brent council that they had made a mistake and that the situation should be reversed.

Sadly, the campaign—a rather underhand campaign—against William Gladstone school has continued. The events that have recently affected the school began with the election of the Labour administration in 1986. Faced with a massive surplus of school places, it proposed to close South Kilburn, Brondesbury in Kilburn, Neasden, Sladebrook and Willesden Green schools, as well as a few others in the constituency of the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson). The one school that survived that process was William Gladstone. Once again, there was a massive campaign. The then Conservative opposition, some Labour councillors and I managed to persuade the council at that stage that William Gladstone was a good school, that it had a good academic record and that it was attracting more and more pupils year by year. The council was persuaded to withdraw its closure proposals while those for all the other schools went ahead. That led to a dramatic reduction in the number of surplus school places in the borough.

The problem now facing many pupils at the school is that they attended other schools which were closed. In particular, a large number of pupils at Sladebrook school opted to move to William Gladstone school, which survived the closure proposals. If we cannot persuade the council and the Government to change their minds, that group of schoolchildren will have to cope with two school

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closures in their brief academic careers. That is almost unique and is an unfair burden to place on young people.

The school survived and was given a clean bill of health, but a whispering campaign was started. The bureaucrats who had made the proposal were almost outraged that they had not got their way. I am sure that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will have encountered such people in town halls, who assume that they know best and are more angry when they are defeated than in any other circumstance. Rather than accept that the council had decided that the school should stay open, a whispering campaign among primary school heads was initiated, I regret to say, by the borough's director of education, warning that the council would be coming back to this, that it was "just a reprieve." Despite all that uncertainty, local primary schools continued to send children to William Gladstone community school because it was recognised as a good school.

The position changed again in 1990 when, after the local elections, we had the delights of a hung council. Immediately, the proposal to close the school was put back on the agenda. George Benham, the director of education, having been frustrated once, thought that he would have another go at trying to close the school. In the chaos which reigned for a year while there was a hung council, the proposal to close the school was narrowly squeezed through—relying, once again, on figures showing that there would be a major surplus of school places in the borough. When the Government considered the proposal for closure, which used figures showing a large surplus of places, it was almost inevitable that they would agree to the closure.

The school fought back and voted to opt for grant-maintained status. It detected that it was not popular among bureaucrats in the town hall, who had been defeated once and thwarted in their ambition to close the school, and felt that its future would be more secure with grant-maintained status. Although at that time it was Labour policy to oppose opting out, because I was aware of the bureaucratic attitude of Brent town hall I did not oppose the application and wished the school well in pursuing it. I recognised that unless it was free to govern itself it would always be under threat from the bureaucrats at Brent town hall, who had determined that it should close.

In the weeks and months which followed, a good campaign brought together all the political parties, particularly Damian Green, the Conservative candidate, and Mark Cummings, the Liberal candidate. Many local councillors realised that a mistake had been made. The campaign ran both before and after the election. We had a meeting with the Secretary of State for Education, who carefully considered what we said, but had to bear in mind the figures that he had been given showing a surplus of places and the fact that if William Gladstone school did not close another almost certainly would.

The position has changed dramatically because Brent's figures, as in so much that Brent does, have turned out to be wrong. That was admitted this week in a committee report submitted by the director of education. The school initially went to the London Research Centre, which provides statistical projections for many London boroughs on such things as school population projections. The centre produced dramatically different figures, showing not a tremendous surplus of places but the possibility, which was admitted on Tuesday at the meeting of the education committee, of a deficit of 238 places by the end of the decade.

That changes matters. I can only ask the Government to reconsider the figures. However much the Minister may wish to win my support and approval, I know that he cannot give a commitment or say, "I will save your school." All I ask is that the Government examine the new figures to ascertain whether a mistake has been made.

I wish to dwell on an especially disturbing issue. Those of us who have been in local government know that there is often a fear of surcharge. Liverpool and Lambeth councillors' recent challenge to the Government on rate capping ended with their being personally bankrupted and barred from office for five years. Every decade or so, there is a confrontation between central and local government which leads to councillors being at risk of being surcharged. I once received a bill for £1 million from the district auditor; I won the case when it went to court, but there is always that fear among councillors.

It is remarkable that George Benham, the director of education, not certain that he could sustain the proposal to close the school by relying on the figures—especially as they were inaccurate—has resorted to trying to stampede councillors by telling them that they are at risk of being surcharged if they vote to reconsider the future of the school. Last month a special meeting of the council was called and it passed a motion which I read into the record. It stated:

> "This Council believes that William Gladstone Community School is a viable school and we recognise that its closure will result in the payment of increased recoupment fees because most parents concerned have indicated that they will send their children out of the borough if the school is closed.
>
> Accordingly, this Council refers the matter to the Education Committee to report on the feasibility of revising the decision to close William Gladstone Community School."

Councillors were told that they risked surcharge if they voted for the motion. Carol Shaw, a Conservative member of the council, showed me a letter from the director of education which warned her that voting for the motion would lead to a surcharge. That is rubbish.

It is the norm for legal advice to be given by legal officers of the council and not by the director of education who, with no legal background or training, can merely venture an opinion on the legality of an action. It takes only a minute to realise that we are talking about the council deciding whether it has made a mistake and then asking the Government whether they can change their mind. The Government must then decide whether that is possible. How could it possibly be illegal to ask the Government, after full consideration, to change their mind? How could that put councillors at risk of surcharge? Such logic is a nonsense, but councillors are often very worried about such matters because they face the possibility of personal bankruptcy.

I said that I would not be critical of the Government, but I am critical of George Benham, who seems to have launched what is almost a political campaign to close the school by lobbying, arm twisting, bullying and frightening councillors with threats of surcharge which are nonsense.

The council motion was discussed at Tuesday's meeting of the education committee. One of the members of the

committee representing religious schools in the borough had said that he was likely to support the retention of the school, but could not vote accordingly. As he was leaving the meeting, he was asked why he had changed his mind. Mr. Ray Lorenzato said that he had received a phone call warning him that he would be surcharged. That is not the way to carry on an honest debate about the worth of a school, based on honest projections and differences of opinion about pupil numbers. It is a squalid, behind-the-scenes set of manoeuvres more worthy of the tactics of President Nixon's White House than senior officers who are supposed to consider only educational merit when giving advice to members of the council.

As so often in recent years, Brent council remains undecided and confused. The education committee will report to the full council in a few weeks and, based on the figures, Brent council will have to decide whether to tell the Government that it has made a mistake and ask how it can get out of it.

It would be absolute nonsense to close a good and popular school, to which an increasing number of parents wish to send their children. It has an improving academic record with increased take-up at 11-plus and a better sixth form retention and uptake than in the past. According to information provided by the London Research Centre, closure of the school could mean that in five or six years' time the council will have to ask the Government for capital funds to build additions to existing schools or to build temporary huts.

I am asking the Government to make it clear today that, if the council decides after further consideration that it has made a mistake, the Government will be prepared to co-operate with the borough to save the school, reopen it, or do whatever can be done to repair the damage.

It is a pity, but Government Ministers do not have a chance to visit every school in contention. This school is excellent. One would assume that a Conservative Government would think it an example of a school which is working well. It has improving academic records, tremendous parental support and respect in the local community. It has not been beset by problems and there have been no scandalous accounts in the local papers about the way it is managed. Any hon. Member would be proud to have such a school in their constituency. It is the sort of school on which we should be building and expanding.

Given the doubts that have been raised about the figures which led the Government to take an honest decision, before the school faces a death sentence will the Government be prepared to reconsider if Brent council asks them to do so after its next council meeting?

2.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Eric Forth): I congratulate the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) on initiating the debate and thank him for the generous tone of his early remarks, especially those about the role of my right hon. and learned Friend the former Secretary of State for Education and Science. More debates of this type might allow more rational discussion to take place and more effective decision-making. Who knows?

This issue is obviously important in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. Such matters are always important for communities and for the Members of Parliament involved, and I understand the role that the hon. Gentleman wishes to continue to play in the matter.

At the outset, I must make it clear that I am advised that if—to use the hon. Gentleman's words—the local education authority were to change its mind, the matter is not quite as simple as it seems, as he probably knows. However flawed he may believe the decision-making procedure to have been, if the education authority decides to reconsider and to make a different disposition, it is not a matter of persuading the present Secretary of State to reverse the previous decision. That is not possible. An application would probably have to be made to open a new school, which may sound slightly quaint—I put it no more strongly than that—but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, with his experience, knows that such matters often work that way and that it might not be as daunting as it sounds.

As the local education authority decided that the school should be closed, and it is on notice, it would have to be reopened as a new school on whatever basis would seem fit. That is the procedure if the local authority decides to reconsider the matter.

I hope that no one believes that applications for grant-maintained status should be seen as a way to escape closure. That is the worst possible basis on which any school would want to apply for such status, as it is supposed to be a basis for the future conduct and vigour of a school not merely a means to save it from an albeit unpopular closure decision.

I welcome the hon. Gentleman's attitude to grant-maintained applications in this case. Perhaps he was the hidden hand behind the decision by his hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench to change their mind about grant-maintained status. Who knows? I shall not press him on that. It is important for the House to understand that such applications should be made on the basis of looking to the future, rather than trying to avoid a decision made by the local education authority, however unpopular that decision may be.

I do not want to go through the history of the matter in detail, as the hon. Gentleman did. Suffice it to say that, in 1991, the two conflicting statutory proposals in respect of the school were published: the first on 19 April 1991 by the governors for grant-maintained status, and the second on 16 May 1991 by Brent to close the school. Faced with such conflicting proposals, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is obliged, first, to inform himself of what has been proposed, secondly, to evaluate the strength of the case for each proposal and, thirdly, to evaluate the grant-maintained proposal against the closure proposal. After he has done that, he must determine, first, the grant-maintained proposal and, secondly, the closure proposal. That was all duly done.

My right hon. Friend considered the proposal to close the school. He noted that consultation had started in 1987 with a series of documents leading to the publication in February 1991 of the final document entitled "Progressing Excellence: Securing Equality", which discussed the options to close two secondary schools, one of which was William Gladstone. That document, together with a four-page summary which was, incidentally, translated into Urdu and Gujerati, was widely distributed. There were consultative meetings in all parts of the borough and the director of education met the governors and parents of the school and other interested parties.

[Mr. Eric Forth]

The proposal was that the school should close in September 1993. To preserve continuity of education wherever possible, the authority planned that in September 1992 no pupils would be admitted to the school. Those due to begin two-year examination courses in the fourth and lower sixth forms would be transferred to other schools. Alternative places would be offered at other schools in the area or at the further education college, subject to the availability of places.

The hon. Gentleman has recognised the main reason for the closure, although he has queried the basis on which it was predicated. The reason was to eliminate the many surplus places in Brent secondary schools as a whole. The authority estimated that the William Gladstone premises could be sold for £2·75 million and that there would be recurrent savings of £205,000 per annum. The authority's objectives were to use the resources thus released to raise the quality of education and the standard of achievement for all pupils, thus substantially reducing the number of pupils going to out-borough schools.

There were 12 statutory objections, including one from the governing body of the school, to the closure proposal. I will go through the main grounds quickly and will comment briefly on each. The first is that the school has good standards and is successful, that the number on roll has increased rapidly and that it is now the most popular school in the south of the borough. That very much reflects the tenor of the hon. Gentleman's comments. Our information is that the school has one of the poorest examination result records in the borough.

Total numbers at the school dropped from 656 in 1986 to 462 in 1989. The number then increased to 560 in 1990, dropping back slightly to 549 in 1991. It has a capacity of 1,080 places, so that even now it is only half full. It is one of the schools with the largest proportion of surplus places in Brent. The majority of pupils leaving William Gladstone's feeder primary schools went to other secondary schools.

The objectors then said that closure would result in there being no co-educational schools in the area. It is true that the two John Kelly single-sex schools are closest to William Gladstone, but there is sufficient spare capacity to accommodate all the pupils at the Queens Park and Willesden co-educational schools, which are about two miles away. That is not an excessive or unreasonable distance.

The objectors then allege that the local education authority has underestimated demand for secondary school places—the point made by the hon. Gentleman. I do not believe that the facts bear that out. The authority and grant-maintained schools provide 12,850 secondary places for the 8,480 pupils on roll in 1991 in the authority as a whole. The LEA estimated that on current trends, and even allowing for a 10 per cent. increase in admissions each year of pupils aged 11, numbers would rise to 9,925 by the year 2000. That would still leave a surplus of almost 3,000 places. The closure of William Gladstone would reduce that by about 1,080 to 1,845, which we believe is more than enough to cope with the vagaries of estimating.

I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's contention that the figuring is sufficiently wrong to undermine the case for closure and that it cannot deal with the question of surplus places. The figures that I have given today, if they are accurate and we believe that they are, suggest that a considerable problem of surplus places would still remain even if William Gladstone school were to close. That must be taken into account.

We cannot plan our school system on the basis that surplus places should be carried in case pupil numbers change in seven or 10 years' time. To carry, deliberately, surplus places to the extent that we are considering here —it is a school with a capacity for more than 1,000, but it is currently accommodating just half that number— against the possibility that they may be needed in the future is not a sensible approach to the planning of education.

The objectors argue that the school is one of the cheapest to maintain. Brent has said that fundamental defects in design have resulted in disproportionately high maintenance costs which have been incurred at the expense of other intrinsically sound schools in Brent. That is Brent's view and, as it is the authority responsible for the maintenance of the fabric of the buildings, it is a view to which we must give great weight.

My right hon. and learned Friend, the former Secretary of State, informed himself of each of the proposals, considered the strength of each case and evaluated them before making his decision. He noted all the points that had been drawn to his attention, as the hon. Gentleman kindly accepted, at the meeting in February of this year. My right hon. and learned Friend also noted all the favourable points about the school. However, in the end, he decided that the balance of advantage lay with the authority's proposals which were aimed at securing the removal of surplus places and the more efficient use of resources in the provision of schools in the authority area. That is why my right hon. and learned Friend made his decision, and it must now be implemented by the authority. We have no power to reverse the decision—only a court can ask us to do that. As the hon. Gentleman will know, an application from the chairman of governors to the High Court for a judicial review to quash my right hon. and learned Friend's decision was not granted.

I have described the background to the case as we see it. There is always scope for debate and an honest difference of opinion on such matters, which must be ones of judgment. One must judge matters in terms of the welfare of the children and the quality of education in any one area. Such decisions depend very much on the judgment of the local education authority as the elected authority charged with the responsibility for delivering education in a community. Authorities come forward with proposals of this type and it is for the Secretary of State to consider the proposals and judge whether they make sense in the circumstances.

Given my reply to the points made by the hon. Gentleman, I believe that the decision was the correct one and, on the basis of the information available then and now, it can be fully justified. If we consider the number of surplus places that are being carried in Brent and the need to deal with that problem—there are more than 1 million surplus places in education throughout the country—the decision can be justified. I understand the fustrations of the governors, of the staff and pupils at the school and of the hon. Gentleman. I ask them to understand that such decisions, difficult and complex though they may be, are inevitably part of a developing education system.

I ask the hon. Gentleman to think about what I have said today, and I shall certainly consider what he has said.

We shall examine what lies behind the problem and consider the hon. Gentleman's arguments. However, I must advise him, as I did at the beginning of my speech, that, even if the local education authority were persuaded to take a different view of the matter, it would have to go about it in the way that I have suggested.

We are always prepared to advise the hon. Gentleman or his authority on the best way forward. I hope that I have been able to satisfy the hon. Gentleman and his constituents that this matter has been dealt with fully, carefully and responsibly by the Secretary of State. That is what we always endeavour to do. Equally, we shall always listen carefully to what is said in the House. I hope that between us we can decide how best to educate our children in Brent and elsewhere. That is our common aim.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 15 June 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Artistic Heritage

1. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what measures he is taking to enable the United Kingdom to retain outstanding items of the nation's artistic heritage.

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. David Mellor): As this is the first Question Time for the new Department, I hope that you will not object, Madam Speaker, if I preface my answer by saying that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and I have been delighted by the positive response to the creation of the Department. It has been welcomed on both sides of the House. I wish to make it clear from the outset that we welcome advice and assistance from all hon. Members. Views will be listened to on their merits. I hope that there will be the very minimum of partisan argument; certainly, I intend to proceed on that basis.

The Waverley system of export controls is the foundation of our policy. Significant grants are made to the national heritage memorial fund. Several important tax concessions are available to assist the retention of pre-eminent works. I have, however, decided against listing certain works of art as a means of prohibiting the export of key heritage items.

Mr. Carrington: My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware of the considerable concern about the inability, because of the high prices that now obtain, of our major public collections to purchase works of art that people attempt to sell on the open market. Will he examine closely the level of purchase grants of our national institutions and the rules that govern the acceptance of works of art in lieu of tax, which are frequently very restrictive and applicable only in certain clearly specified circumstances?

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's question. Purchase grants have been frozen since 1985, largely because the substantial additional resources that have been made available to museums and galleries have gone into refurbishment and towards increasing the sums available for running costs. I note what my hon. Friend said, however. He knows that we have considerably increased the sums of money available to the national heritage memorial fund, which was of great assistance recently in the purchase of the Holbein portrait for the national gallery. I certainly intend to look at the various ways in which we can ensure that pre-eminent works are not lost to the nation. I hope to have something further to say about that in due course.

Mr. Sheldon: I look forward to hearing what the right hon. and learned Gentleman has to say in due course, but is he aware that many great works of art were obtained in the last century when, by comparison with other countries, this country was far more wealthy than it is ever likely to be again? It is important that we do not lose important works of art. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman is opposed to listing, we shall have to produce far more substantial sums of money than have been thought of so far. How does he intend to deal with that?

Mr. Mellor: In recent years, we have managed to retain just over half the items that were listed under the Waverley rules. I accept that that is not good enough. For instance, I should like the acceptance-in-lieu scheme to be more widely used. We have a provision of £10 million a year. Although the amount was doubled, last year it was only £3·8 million. The right hon. Gentleman will know that the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art made the point about the availability of extra public resources. When I dealt with the question of the list, I was not in a position to say that extra resources would be made available, but I have not rejected that application. I have the need to meet the challenge of keeping such items in this country well in mind when I frame my public expenditure bids, although how far they will succeed in a difficult period for public expenditure remains to be seen.

Mr. Brooke: In that context, does my right hon. and learned Friend make any distinction in his mind between British works of art and those works of art of other lands that were brought here at some stage in the past?

Mr. Mellor: That point is certainly taken into account as part of the Waverley rules. The Waverley rules apply to pre-eminent works that originated from outside this country. Origin plays a part in the interesting judgments that have to be made according to the Waverley rules.

Mr. Fisher: I join other hon. Members in congratulating the Secretary of State on his appointment and on the creation of his Ministry, which will be widely welcomed. I am less optimistic than he is about not resuming political hostilities. Before such hostilities resume, may I say that I hope that he gets a great deal of pleasure from, and does something with, his job? I also congratulate the right hon. and learned Gentleman on rejecting the idiocy of the listing system and on his statement last week. Only his predecessor and Benito Mussolini thought that the system was a good idea.

I am disappointed by the right hon. and learned Gentleman's response to the question about unfreezing national galleries' purchasing funds. He knows that the increase in funds elsewhere does not address the problem. When he was Arts Minister before, he listened to the chairman and directors of those national galleries constantly urging him to unfreeze those funds. Will he now call together the chairmen of the trustees, the directors of those national galleries and the chairman of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art to discuss, on the basis that those funds will be unfrozen, how best to unfreeze them? If he does not do that, his Department will soon be known not as the Ministry of National Heritage but as the Ministry of National Heritage and Humbug.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman's intervention deteriorated during its course. On his first comment, if I can help him into the shadow Cabinet by my appointment, that will be a job well done.

I have noted the reviewing committee's view that extra public resources should be available for intervention. I have not rejected that view, although I have to fit it in with the various other things that we have to do. There is a range of ways in which heritage items can be kept in this country. We have heard about the acceptance-in-lieu scheme and we know that there is a douceur available for sales by private treaty which has been of great use in relation to, for example, the purchase of the Holbein. We know that, when I was last Arts Minister, the national heritage memorial fund received a substantial boost in resources which has been deployed very usefully. We also know that, in a prosperous nation in which wealthy people no longer have to go into tax exile, it is possible to have individual acts of beneficence, such as the decision by Sir Andrew Lloyd-Webber—I congratulate him on his knighthood—to purchase a Canaletto, which is now on public display. There is a range of ways in which things can be done. However, I do not ignore the role of public resources.

Relocation

2. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement about the future location of his Department.

Mr. Mellor: I shall make an announcement in due course.

Mr. Hughes: I add my congratulations to the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary. There could rarely be two people who are more qualified to take on the job. I envy them it myself: I cannot think of a better job to do in government.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman will never get the chance.

Mr. Hughes: The chance may come.

When the Secretary of State evaluates the options for the location of his Department, will he consider seriously the office space in Rose court above the Rose theatre in Bankside on the south bank? The space is vacant and has been vacant since the Rose theatre was built. It is cheap and it would be much nearer than Canary Wharf. There could be no better location for the Department of National Heritage than Bankside, at the centre of Elizabethan greatness in England. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give that idea serious consideration?

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman said. If he will kindly supply me with a list of all properties available in his constituency, I shall peruse it.

Mr. Bowis: May I suggest to my right hon. and learned Friend that the location of his Department should be in something more mobile—perhaps a mobile home—so that he can spend quite a lot of his time touring the country and ensuring that central to his plans for the arts and heritage are the many centres of excellence in the regions, not least the region of London? Away from the west end, there are many superb ventures to support the arts, from the Hackney Empire to the Battersea arts centre.

Mr. Mellor: I am glad that the Battersea arts centre came into the question. I will certainly bear in mind what my hon. Friend says. I must, however, disappoint the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson)—who, sadly, is not in his place—who suggested that wherever the new Department was, it should be called Stan Flashman house. I reject that suggestion.

Mr. Boyes: Wherever the Secretary of State locates his new office, will he recognise the importance of photography——

Madam Speaker: Order. May we get the location of photography correct? The hon. Gentleman's question would then be in order. The question concerns the Department's location.

Mr. Boyes: Wherever the Secretary of State locates his offices, I hope that he will recognise the importance of photography, particularly by buying pictures from young photographers—the men and women who will be the photographers of the future. Will he bear that in mind?

Mr. Mellor: I will certainly do that. It was very generous of the hon. Gentleman to exclude himself by asking only about young photographers.

Taylor Report

3. **Mr. Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he has any proposals to modify the recommendations of the Taylor report as they relate to football clubs in the current third and fourth divisions of the English league; and if he will make a statement.

15. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to review the policy for all-seater stadiums for Football League clubs.

Mr. Mellor: I announced last week that I was re-examining the all-seating requirement, with a particular focus on third and fourth division clubs and clubs in the second division with low average attendances. I have set a four-week period for the receipt of further views, and I intend to make an announcement before the summer recess. I am grateful to the all-party football committee and others in the House for their advice on this important matter.

Mr. Hicks: I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's interim statement on that subject. Does he agree that, whatever arrangements are eventually introduced, there must be maximum flexibility? The arrangements must take account of sides such as my local team, Plymouth Argyle, which seems to vacillate between the second and third divisions with amazing frequency. Would it not be sensible to adopt a formula whereby, if the average attendance is less than 50 per cent. of the ground's capacity, the club should be eligible for exemption?

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's suggestion. I take the House with me when I say that we all agree that large clubs should be all-seater. Equally, we all agree that small clubs should not be all-seater if that is consistent with safety arrangements, as I believe it is. The difficulty is in deciding into which category each club will fit. That could be achieved by membership of a particular

division or by maximum gate. We are considering that important detail and I will bear my hon. Friend's advice in mind.

Sir Michael Neubert: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, although improved arrangements for safety inside stadiums are very welcome, the public outside stadiums also need to be safeguarded against the activities of the kind of empty-headed, beer-bellied louts who once again besmirched our national name in Sweden this weekend? Is not the key factor that they should be kept as far away as possible from alcohol?

Mr. Mellor: I did my best to express in Sweden what I feel certain is the feeling in the whole House about the disgraceful behaviour of a small minority of British——

Mr. Wilson: English!

Mr. Mellor: —of English football fans in Malmo at the weekend. That have very strongly reinforced my view that alcohol and football supporters—certainly English football supporters—do not mix well. We need to bear that in mind for the future.

Mr. Pendry: Will the Minister accept from me the congratulations of all football lovers in the House for taking the stand that he took with regard to relaxing the Taylor recommendations and for listening to the football world, while ensuring that safety standards are not relaxed as a result of the review? Will he now consider the related problem of the admission charges of certain premier league clubs, which receive Football Trust moneys, which are forcing many genuine football fans away from those grounds? Will he meet the Football Trust and urge it to ensure that its grants are related to realistic admission prices?

Mr. Mellor: Before the Football Trust decides what grants to make available, it must bear in mind resources available to clubs. Increases in admission prices are plainly a matter for the directors of the clubs concerned; they are not my responsibility. However, I hope that all clubs will use their best endeavours not to price out of their grounds their most loyal supporters, some of whom do not have the means to withstand major increases in seat prices.

Mr. Grocott: Will the Secretary of State acknowledge the serious damage that is done to the finances of the third and fourth divisions—and, indeed, to the second division —by the deal that has been struck between the BBC and BSkyB for the coverage of live matches? Will he now link his responsibility for sport with his responsibility for broadcasting and acknowledge the simple truth that, far from extending people's freedom of choice, the proliferation of channels is restricting freedom of choice for many people—including many of my constituents who, like his, will no longer be able to watch live league football? Does he not think that that is a disgrace? Is it not time that he used his authority to encourage the football authorities to think again?

Mr. Mellor: When the Broadcasting Act 1990 was going through Parliament a couple of years ago, it was never suggested that league football should be on the list of protected events. Not so long ago, live league football was not available on any channel. It would be wrong for us to seek to intervene in the ability of the premier league to sell its product as it chooses. The real test for the premier league will be what it does with the money. I hope that the arrangements will lead not to an escalation of transfer fees and of the money paid to footballers but to an improvement in ground conditions, so that fans are housed in ways more appropriate to the 21st century than to the beginning of the 20th.

As for broadcasting, there is more choice for sport on television today than there has ever been. We have to accept that we cannot opt out of the satellite revolution —nor should we try to do so. It would be perverse if we in Britain, one of the great centres of broadcasting, were somehow or other to try to restrict the development of satellite broadcasting from which so many other countries are benefiting.

Mr. John Carlisle: As my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) said, the Taylor report was primarily concerned with hooliganism within grounds, but last night's scenes in Sweden, disgraceful as they were, highlighted problems that could exist outside grounds, whether in this country or elsewhere. What consultations has my right hon. and learned Friend had with his colleagues in the Home Office regarding those so-called fans, who would have been recognised on television? Were British police there? Does my right hon. and learned Friend have any ties through which those people can be brought to justice and, I hope, banned from football grounds in this country?

Mr. Mellor: The British police were much in evidence in Malmo and are working very closely with the Swedish police. Assistant Commissioner Malcolm George of the Greater Manchester police is leading our police team. The police have been looking at the videos that were taken of the incidents and have been identifying fans. Some of those fans who can be proved to have committed criminal offences are being charged in Sweden. If convicted, they could be prohibited from entering football grounds in the United Kingdom. Even if they are not convicted, if they can be identified, their names can be provided to other countries which may be hosting football matches. If those countries see fit, they can exclude those players— *[Interruption.]* There may be a few players whom we want to exclude as well, but that is another matter. Those countries will be able to exclude those fans from admission. That is very important. Half a dozen fans were excluded this time. It should be more the next time England plays abroad.

Mr. Fatchett: Further to the right hon. and learned Gentleman's reply to his hon. Friends the Members for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) and for Romford (Sir M. Neubert), does he accept that Opposition Members totally condemn the behaviour of a small number of English football supporters? Will he recognise that their behaviour has put back the reputation of English football and damaged England's reputation in Europe?

What steps were taken to liaise with the Swedish police so that known troublemakers were recognised and isolated, and appropriate action taken? Was the Football Association responsible for selling tickets to individuals who have already been prosecuted for offences in this country? If so, what action will be taken to stop a repeat of the events of the past two nights? Will the Secretary of State make it clear to other countries with which English

football is involved that the Government will take every possible action to ensure that there is no repeat of what happened in Sweden?

Mr. Mellor: No one can ever guarantee that some people will not behave badly. There was great understanding on the part of both UEFA and the Swedish authorities of the real job that the football authorities, the Government and the police in Britain have done to improve arrangements. That included supplying the Swedish authorities with the names of nearly 300 known troublemakers so that they could be excluded if Sweden saw fit. It also included the advice which was formally minuted in the Council of Europe minutes of the official meetings before the championship that beer should not be served to English football fans.

I very much regret that, once again, we have had the opportunity of proving that beer and certain English football fans do not mix. That is not to say that that in any sense excuses the lamentable behaviour of some of those fans, flying in the face of the warmest of welcomes. Certainly, everything possible is being done to ensure that those who can be identified as playing a part in those events are arrested. Already, serious charges have been preferred by the Swedes. I certainly hope that serious charges will be preferred wherever there is evidence to justify it. I hope that we shall be able to exclude those convicted from going to football matches again for a long time.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does the Secretary of State agree that the action that is taken following the incidents during the weekend in Sweden should fall on the heads of those who perpetrated those deeds, thereby protecting the vast majority of fans who went to Sweden to enjoy the matches, were peaceful, and did, indeed, enjoy the matches?

Mr. Mellor: There is no doubt about that. When I walked around Malmo yesterday, there was plenty of evidence of fans who appreciated the warmth of the welcome that they had received and themselves apologised to local residents for what had happened. I also make it absolutely clear that the Swedish authorities have done nothing to blow up the incidents out of proportion. If anything, they have sought to minimise them. There is no question but that there was anything other than a warm welcome in Sweden for Britons, whether football fans or others. I congratulate the Swedes on the generous hospitality that they showed us and on their willingness to overlook the disgraceful behaviour of a small minority.

Heritage Assets, Greenwich

4. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will visit Greenwich to consider how the unique heritage assets of the area can be best promoted and preserved.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Robert Key): My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State visited the national maritime museum on 26 May, and I am a regular visitor to the borough.

Mr. Raynsford: I thank the Minister for his answer, but I stress that the unique and special element of the national heritage represented by the centre of Greenwich is more than merely the national maritime museum and requires urgent attention. Does the Minister recognise that the current appalling levels of traffic congestion are destroying and damaging that unique location? Is he prepared to discuss with his colleagues at the Department of Transport effective measures to restrict that traffic before the unique assets of the nation's and Greenwich's heritage are damaged irreparably?

Mr. Key: Yes, I will. I should like to take the matter up with the borough itself. I visited Greenwich last Thursday, taking advantage of the one-line Whip, and renewed my acquaintance with the centre. I agree entirely that there is a tremendous problem of traffic, both around the centre and further along towards Woolwich. I have a long association with St. Alfege's church, as one of my forebears spent a long time just before the second world war raising funds to repair the roof. Unfortunately, he did not inform the Luftwaffe. There is a tremendous heritage in Greenwich, which needs protection, and the borough will receive a great deal of attention from me because it has some of the most wonderful secret parts of our heritage —for instance, the Trinity museum of 1616. I am well aware that there is more to Greenwich's heritage than the national maritime museum.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Will my hon. Friend consider whether there are ways of encouraging Greenwich, like other boroughs, to contribute to the process of drawing tourists away from the main pressure points so that not only Greenwich receives environmental improvement? The site of the royal arsenal in Woolwich and Eltham palace in my constituency could be opened so that people could gain from the heritage of the whole borough. That would require co-ordinated action.

Mr. Key: Yes—and I have enjoyed singing in Eltham palace in my time. I visited the Woolwich arsenal site last Thursday evening to see how well the Ministry of Defence is playing its part. I was disappointed with the old entrance to the Woolwich dockyard area, but we could do something to improve that, too.

Arts and Media

5. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he last met the chairman of the Arts Council to discuss the national arts and media strategy document.

Mr. Mellor: I regularly talk to the chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain. I last saw him on 2 June to discuss a range of issues, including progress on the Arts Council's national arts and media strategy.

Mr. Hall: I am grateful for that answer. Does the Secretary of State recognise the excellence of the work done by local authorities in promoting the arts? For example, my own borough of Warrington has spent £350,000 on refurbishing its art gallery. It has staged several art exhibitions and in July will hold the premiere exhibition in the United Kingdom of the exciting Czech artist Jaroslav Cita. Will the Secretary of State reassure the House that he will fully consult local authorities in drawing up any future arts and media strategies and that they will be fully involved in the delivery of that strategy?

Mr. Mellor: I hope to have an opportunity to see for myself what Warrington does during one of my visits to

the north-west. I have no doubt that the arts benefit most through generous Arts Council funding, combined with strong support from local authorities for local artistic activity. When I was Minister for the Arts, I had regular contact with local authority representatives, who serve on regional arts boards and who meet formally under the umbrella of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. I look forward to continuing to meet those representatives in my new post.

Mr. Jessel: I warmly congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend and the Government on the substantial increase in funding for the Arts Council in recent years. Has he noticed, however, that the Arts Council document makes scant reference to the fact that much of the greatest heritage in British and European art has a religious or patriotic inspiration? The document contains long sections on women's and feminist art, black art, disabled art, gay and lesbian art, young people's art, old people's art, and so on. Have the authors got their priorities right?

Mr. Mellor: I am sure that that is a perfectly legitimate question for my hon. Friend to direct to the authors of the document. At present, it is only a consultative document. I gather that I am to receive the finished product in September, and I shall read it with interest then.

Mr. Tony Banks: I realise that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will be very much a hands-on Minister, and he has an awful lot of things to put his hands on. If, however, responsibility for funding the national arts bodies is to be taken away from the Arts Council, has it a future? Does the Minister envisage it remaining in its present form during, say, the next 12 months?

Mr. Mellor: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman asked me that. I have no ambitions to take over the funding of national bodies. Given a structure in which more funding decisions are made regionally, I think that the key question is what size the Arts Council should be. I also think, however, that the continuation of the Arts Council should be very much part of my plans—although we should seek mechanisms to ensure that the maximum amount spent by the Treasury for the benefit of the arts goes to arts organisations, and is not syphoned into excessive bureaucracy.

Mr. Brandreth: I bring my right hon. and learned Friend greetings from the city of Chester, which is the European capital of national heritage, and salute the Government for increasing arts funding by 60 per cent. in the past 12 years or so. May I remind my right hon. and learned Friend, however, that in his considerations with the Arts Council it is important to bear in mind the contribution of the amateur, as well as that of the professional to the world of arts?

Mr. Mellor: Yes—and I am sure that that is true in politics as well.

Tourism, Bolsover

6. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects to visit Bolsover castle, Hardwick hall and Ogston reservoir to promote tourism in the area.

Mr. Key: I should be very happy to make such a visit when a suitable opportunity arises.

Mr. Skinner: If the Minister decides—or dares—to go to Bolsover, he had better take some money with him and change the standard spending assessments for Bolsover and other local authorities to those which apply to Westminster and Wandsworth so as to improve the infrastructure, promote tourism in the area and get rid of the dioxin that is blighting it. If he decides to go without any money, we shall take him to Ogston reservoir which, despite the drought, is still deep enough to submerge a big fat Minister.

Mr. Key: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his gentle and friendly welcome, and I look forward to being given tea and sympathy in his ancestral home when I visit his constituency. It is just as well that in my previous incarnation I was a local government finance Minister. If only the hon. Gentleman's county council and other local authorities would stop mucking about and get down to some hard business, we might get somewhere.

To reply specifically to the points that the hon. Gentleman has made, I was indeed distressed to hear that the walls of Bolsover castle are crumbling in spite of the hon. Gentleman. I understand that research is being done by the Building Research Establishment and I shall read it with great interest. I also look forward to visiting Ogston reservoir. The hon. Gentleman should be proud to represent Hardwick hall, Bolsover castle and Ogston reservoir, which have an excellent record on tourism. An increasing number of people visit that part of the world, despite the hon. Gentleman.

Mrs. Currie: Would it not do wonders for tourism in Derbyshire if the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) were taken at his word, locked up in Bolsover castle and the key thrown away, and if he were then encouraged to make an exhibition of himself up there? I assure my hon. Friend of a warm welcome in south Derbyshire. May I invite him to take another look at the potential for tourism of the Trent and Mersey canal which runs right through my constituency?

Mr. Key: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her warm and friendly welcome and I look forward to visiting her constituency when I am in that part of the world. She is absolutely right to draw my attention and that of the House to the potential of waterways in tourism. Water is crucial there, as it is for urban regeneration schemes, and it is an important part of our tourist industry as well as our heritage.

Arts Administration

7. **Mr. Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he last met the chairs of the regional arts boards to discuss further devolution of arts administration.

Mr. Key: I look forward to meeting all the chairmen of the regional arts boards in due course. The Arts Council will submit to me by October its proposals for further delegation of its funding responsibilities.

Mr. Tipping: Will the Minister give an assurance that he intends to press ahead with the process of devolution? Bearing in mind the important part played by local authorities such as Nottinghamshire county council and the east midlands, will he assure us that they will have an important role in the process? The Minister will be aware

of Nottinghamshire county council's fine support for opera. Will he attend the opening of the new community opera in September in Mansfield?

Mr. Key: If that were possible, I would be keen to do so, and I look forward to hearing more details. Yes, it is clearly our intention to press ahead with those reforms, which will be of great benefit in terms of more local accountability and will encourage more access to, and interest in, the arts locally.

National Lottery

9. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the impact on the pools industry of the introduction of a national lottery.

Mr. Mellor: The consultation period on the White Paper finished on 1 June. We have had a number of responses from the pools industry. We shall be considering its views, and those of other respondents, before bringing forward proposals for legislation.

Mr. Alton: Will the Secretary of State confirm that in the course of examination of the implications of the national lottery he will look at examples elsewhere in the world? Does he recognise that there is no example anywhere in the world of a pools industry thriving alongside a national lottery? Given that the football pools industry employs 6,500 people, mainly women, that last year £300 million came into the national Exchequer from football pools, and that in areas such as Greater Liverpool many people depend on the pools for their jobs, will he give great consideration to the consequences for those employed and consider bringing a national lottery, should there be one, to an area such as Merseyside to compensate for the jobs that will be lost?

Mr. Mellor: I shall certainly bear those points in mind, along with the others made. One is always keen to look at international experience, although I am not sure how well developed pools industries are in other countries compared with that in our own. I want the national lottery to be a great success, as I believe do most hon. Members. I do not see the national lottery as meaning the end of the football pools. Far from it—many people who do the football pools will continue to do so: it is part of their way of life. The hon. Gentleman should not be too gloomy about the future of the football pools.

Sir Ivan Lawrence *rose*—— [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I begin by congratulating my right hon. and learned Friend on his inspired appointment. Is he aware that nowhere in Europe has a national lottery killed off a football pools industry where the football industry is strong and the pools industry is efficient? Can he tell us whether any of the pools in Britain have applied to run the national lottery, and whether he has told them that if they are so feeble and weak that they cannot bear the idea of competition they will not be much use running the national lottery?

Mr. Mellor: My hon. and learned Friend will have noted the pleasure that his knighthood has given his many friends in the House and I join them in congratulating him.

I wish to consider with care a number of issues relating to the football pools. I believe that it is absolutely clear that the industry can continue, and that it cannot and does not expect to have the right of veto over other developments. I cannot help feeling that the national lottery, as my hon. and learned Friend proved in a debate that he instigated a few months ago, is an idea whose time has come. We want to ensure that the maximum benefit from the proceeds of the national lottery goes to the many things that we all care about, but which, unfortunately, are never in pole position to obtain major increases from the Treasury.

Edinburgh Festival

10. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to make an official visit to Edinburgh during the 1992 international festival.

Mr. Key: Both my right hon. and learned Friend and I look forward to visiting the Edinburgh festival.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful and pleased to hear that the Secretary of State will visit Edinburgh during the festival and I assure him that he will receive a warm welcome from the people of Edinburgh and of Scotland. However, had the Secretary of State visited Scotland today, he would have been subject to an intensely warm reaction following his thoughtless comments about "British" football fans when referring to the disgraceful behaviour of English fans. May I remind the Minister that no Scottish fans were anywhere near Malmö, and that not one Scottish supporter has been in any kind of trouble? The same——

Madam Speaker: Order. This is Question Time, not a statement.

Mr. Key: I am not quite so sensitive to that particular problem as the hon. Gentleman. I have a Scottish wife and I am a Scottish-registered teacher.

On the main question, I look forward to visiting the Edinburgh festival and this year, as in previous years, it will be a huge success given its increased funding. I look forward to making some progress with my knowledge of the arts in Scotland, after too long an absence since I had my first job there as a school master. I also look forward to visiting the Perth repertory company, which has an outstanding record. Incidentally, that theatre was saved by my cousin.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Disclosure of Evidence

29. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the rules on disclosure of evidence in criminal cases.

30. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the guidelines governing disclosure in criminal cases.

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): Law and practice on disclosure have developed substantially in recent years, both before and since the Attorney-General's guidelines in 1981. In their evidence to the royal commission, the Law Officers have recommended that the rules on disclosure be given statutory force based on fairness and practicability.

Mr. Bennett: I thank the Attorney-General for that reply. However, given that the police and prosecutors—some of them now in high places—appeared in the past to conceal evidence that was inconvenient to them, what will the Attorney-General and the Government do to restore public confidence that there will be full disclosure and justice? In trying to restore public confidence, will he assure us that the May inquiry will be completed and that it will not be gagged by some of those same people in high places?

The Attorney-General: While I do not know of any evidence of a conspiracy by prosecutors in high places, there are lessons to be learnt from recent cases. I believe that if we have a statutory framework along the lines of the evidence that my predecessor and I have submitted to the royal commission we shall make progress in overcoming those serious problems.

Mr. Mullin: Has not the suppression of inconvenient evidence by the Director of Public Prosecutions been a feature of all recent major miscarriages of justice? If the Attorney-General has read the judgment in the Judith Ward case he will see that the judges said that the DPP's attitude towards disclosure, about which the court questioned her several times, remained "opaque to the end"? Will the Attorney-General make that attitude less opaque?

The Attorney-General: As I have already said, there are lessons to be learnt from the Judith Ward case, among others. I do not accept some of the ways in which the hon. Gentleman has put them, but the lessons involve prosecutors, those who assist them, the police and those who present cases. The essential factor is fairness and competence so that people know what to disclose and that they do so in a way which makes it properly useful to the defence.

Mr. Garnier: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give the House an idea of the timing involved in the introduction of any statutory application of the rules on disclosure? Does he accept that statutory applications will enable all parties involved in the criminal process to understand where their duties lie and thus know exactly where they stand?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend makes an important point. Unless people understand what is expected of them, it is much easier to fail to do so, without malice underlying that failure. The royal commission is to report in approximately a year's time. It will then be necessary to consider carefully what it recommends, but, against that time scale of a year to report, it should be possible to judge roughly how long it will take.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: In considering disclosure of evidence, will my right hon. Friend balance the matter by abolishing the right to silence?

The Attorney-General: One of the recommendations put forward by a number of people, including my predecessor and me, is that to achieve a fair trial from everybody's point of view there should be wider disclosure, subject to safeguards, by the defence of their case as well as by the prosecution of theirs. That is more likely to lead to justice, which requires not only that the innocent should not be convicted but that the guilty should be convicted.

Mr. Fraser: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman do three things? First, will he amend the Attorney-General's guidelines so that unused evidence is always supplied to the defence, unless withheld with the consent of the trial judge on public interest grounds? Secondly, will he seriously consider the judicial supervision of investigation in serious criminal offences? Thirdly, will he now try to ensure that, alongside the prosecution, the defence always has equal access to forensic facilities?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman's third point is well taken. As for his first two points, it would not be appropriate to seek to amend the guidelines as a formal act prior to the report of the royal commission. On judicial supervision, if the hon. Gentleman is referring to something like an investigating magistrate system, that would be an enormous step to take in our system and we must await the royal commission's report. However, there are recommendations for more court involvement in disclosure in the evidence that I and my predecessor have given.

Mr. David Martin: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, in the early 1970s when I was practising, it was a matter of honourable practice that barristers disclosed evidence, even if it was against their interests as prosecutor? Anybody not doing so would be considered a dishonest practitioner. Is that not still the position at the Bar and should not anyone discovered behaving dishonestly be disbarred?

The Attorney-General: The answer to my hon. Friend's question is yes. Anybody caught acting dishonourably should be disbarred. However, there is more to it than honourable practice. One must also have a definite practice and, as my hon. Friend knows, practice has changed considerable since the early 1970s. Following the Confait case, changes were made and then the Attorney-General's guidelines were introduced. Those have been developed in common law. I agree with my hon. Friend's first point.

Hillsborough Disaster

31. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received concerning the right of relatives of those killed at the Hillsborough stadium disaster to reopen, legal proceedings.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer): My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has received a number of representations from Members of this House and will take a decision on an outstanding formal application for consent under section 13 of the Coroners Act 1988 as soon as possible.

Mr. Alton: Does the Minister understand the sense of grief felt by many people, including my constituent Philip Hammond whose boy was tragically killed at Hillsborough, and their sense that no line can be drawn on the issue until every legal remedy has been exhausted? Will he therefore assure the House that that announcement will not be long in coming and that he will try to understand the feelings of the relatives involved, who do not feel that the inquest process has been exhaustive?

The Solicitor-General: I am conscious of the continuing grief and anxiety of the many individuals affected by that

tragedy. For that reason, the decision must be carefully considered—and it will be. We shall make a decision as soon as possible.

War Crimes

32. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Attorney-General when he expects to bring prosecutions under the War Crimes Act 1991.

The Attorney-General: Both the Metropolitan police and the Crown prosecution service have dedicated teams examining the evidence relating to alleged war crimes. It has been possible to narrow and focus the area of investigation, but the question of prosecutions must await completion of individual investigations and a careful scrutiny of all the evidence obtained.

Mr. Townsend: Is it not disgraceful that this country is about to follow the old Soviet Union and modern Israel in staging vindictive war crimes trials? Is it not true that we are dealing with only three elderly individuals, all former citizens of the Baltic states? Is it not also highly unlikely that any one of them would be alive to be sentenced if he were found guilty? Would it not be wise to bring this whole stupid business to a rapid end?

The Attorney-General: The investigations followed a statutory enactment in accordance with the will of Parliament, but any prosecution decision will be taken in accordance with the principles that apply to all other prosecutions, in which fairness to all parties, including the accused, is an important, if not an essential, part.

Mr. Janner: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that prosecution for war crimes is not regarded as a stupid business, as has been alleged, by anyone with any real or certainly any personal involvement in the mass murders concerned? In view of the decision of the House, by an overwhelming majority from both sides, will the Attorney-General please confirm that when the evidence is ready, it will be assessed by the Director of Public Prosecutions and that she will decide, as he has said, on the ordinary principles of our law, whether there is sufficient evidence to warrant prosecution and, if there is sufficient evidence, prosecutions will proceed as swiftly as is possible and proper?

The Attorney-General: The evidence, as and when or if and when it appears and appears to be sufficient to give rise to a prosecution, will be assessed against the ordinary criteria, without fear or favour, affection or ill will.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Cotton

35. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about aid to cotton-producing countries; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): None, previously.

Mr. Thurnham: Is my hon. Friend aware that many cotton-producing countries—India, Pakistan, China and Egypt—force their cotton farmers to sell their cotton at well below world market prices, thus giving their cotton spinners an unfair advantage? Will he encourage countries receiving British aid not to harm British industry in that way—even if the Opposition spokeswoman likes to bite the hand that feeds her?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I agree that the practice is wrong, but it is a matter for my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade. He is aware of anxiety about the practice of double pricing raw cotton in some cotton-producing countries and we have made known our views on double pricing under the relevant GATT consultation procedures.

ODA Budget

36. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the overseas development budget in 1992-93; and what is planned for 1993-94.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Provision for aid to developing countries is £1,831 million this year and £1,899 million for 1993-94.

Mr. Riddick: Are those not enormous sums, and do they not demonstrate the Government's massive contribution and commitment to helping the poorest countries and people? Does my hon. Friend agree that by failing to tackle the problem of overpopulation in Rio world leaders have failed to tackle what is probably the most fundamental and pressing difficulty facing the third world today?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes, they are indeed enormous sums. The issue of population figured rather more significantly at Rio than had at one time seemed likely, and we helped to give it the prominence that it deserved, against the reluctance of some countries to do so. The issue was and has been actively promoted by my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development.

Ms. Abbott: Will the Minister accept that the Government's aid budget is not in line with United Nations guidelines and that although overpopulation is an issue, it is not the fundamental cause of poverty in the third world? The fundamental cause of poverty, hunger and suffering in the third world is the economic relationship between those countries and the west—and that includes trade and aid. It would be very unfortunate if the issue of population, which is a real one, were used to divert attention from the failings of the Government in relation to aid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I never said that population was the overall problem. As I have said, we have a very large aid budget, which has been growing substantially in the past five years. It is 3 per cent. larger this year than last and it is certainly of a significant size.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Recognising that the United Kingdom's aid budget is indeed large, will my hon. Friend confirm that it is the sixth largest budget in the world? Will he also confirm that there is a spurious intellectual quality about the 0·7 per cent. target that the United Nations seems to want to foist on us? Finally, does he agree that what is important is not only how much is spent on aid but how much gets to the people who need it?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes, I can confirm that ours is the sixth largest programme in the world, and it is extremely

well targeted. The quality of our aid is recognised internationally—especially the fact that it helps the very poorest people in the world.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: How can the Minister say that it is an enormous budget when it has been cut by half in the past 13 years? It is not the sixth largest in the world; it is the 14th largest when calculated as a proportion of GDP.

Do the Government intend to revise their ODA spending plans, as published in the public expenditure White Paper? Will the Minister revise those figures for the next three years as a result of Rio?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I can see that the hon. Gentleman supplied the information on which the Leader of the Opposition based his remark the other day that the aid programme had been cut in half since 1979. Nothing could be further from the truth. The hon. Gentleman should help his right hon. Friend better than that. Since 1979 the size of the aid budget has more than doubled in nominal terms.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. Friend remind the third world and the aid lobby that the most effective way to sponsor economic development in the third world is to encourage private investment and the adoption of a social market economy?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes, my hon. Friend is right to emphasise private investment and the adoption of a social market economy. As he knows, much of our aid is targeted on countries that adopt good government practices, which include the adoption of sensible financial policies which lead to economic prosperity and growth.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister and the Prime Minister reaffirmed at Rio our commitment to 0·7 per cent., and now we have had a further clear statement of that target, but shall we ever be given a statement of the timetable for achieving it? Or shall we continue giving less than half the figure that we have accepted as the minimum that we should commit to countries far less well off than our own?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As the hon. Gentleman said, the Government reaffirmed our commitment to the United Nations aid target. The important thing is to make progress as the economy grows. In the past five years, the aid budget has grown by 8 per cent. in real terms. In other words, the budget has grown in periods of growth, and this year it is 3 per cent. higher than last.

Mr. Watts: Will my hon. Friend undertake to review our aid programme to India in the light of the good government criteria in view of that country's appalling human rights record in Kashmir and the Punjab?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As my hon. Friend knows, the Indians have enormous problems with terrorism in the Punjab and Kashmir. All terrorist matters must be properly dealt with. There have been abuses in India, but we have taken them up with the Indian Government and I am happy to say that they have announced the appointment of a human rights commission, which we have welcomed. We want progress on that to attend to these difficult matters.

Biodiversity Convention

37. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the conclusions of the EC Environment and Development Ministers meeting on 5 May regarding the signing of an effective convention on biodiversity.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: At the joint Environment and Development Council on 5 May, Ministers reaffirmed their strong support for the conclusion of effective conventions on climate change and on biological diversity, to be signed in Rio.

Mr. Wareing: What will be the cost to the British Government of signing the biodiversity treaty, and what amount is being avoided by the United States which that country would have faced if it had signed the treaty? Is it not deplorable that the richest country on earth should seek to evade its responsibilities? Will the Minister tell the Prime Minister that when he assumes the chairmanship of the European Council on 1 July, Britain will expect the European Community, through him, to exert maximum pressure on the United States to take up those responsibilities?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is simply not possible to put a figure today on the cost of implementing the biodiversity convention, which will be implemented over many years. It is important that the convention was signed, and most important that it contains more than 150 signatures. We are already giving a great deal of financial assistance to help developing countries with biodiversity conservation. The amount is more than £10 million bilaterally each year. We have committed more than £40 million to the initial funding of the global environmental facility, and nearly 50 per cent. of the funds spent so far in that area have been for biodiversity.

Street Children

38. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's policy on providing overseas aid targeted to help street children.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Improving the health and social development of children is a major objective of the ODA and we aim to provide for children to be the direct beneficiaries of our programmes.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my hon. Friend for that excellent reply and I thank the Prime Minister for having put this country's moral stamp of approval on the programme for helping street children by visiting the street children centre in Rio. Can my hon. Friend confirm that the Foreign Office is looking in particular at Guatemala and trying to persuade it to take positive steps to help street children?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who is shortly to make a statement, visited the San Martino refuge in Rio de Janeiro last week. The United Kingdom's interest in the fate of these unhappy children is well recognised and understood by experts in Brazil. We are a leading country in this area.

Earth Summit

3.31 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the United Nations conference on the environment and development in Brazil. I represented the United Kingdom at the conference together with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Overseas Development and my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside. I should also like to report to the House on my visits to the United States and to Colombia. During the past week, I have also had meetings with a number of other Heads of Government.

As the House will know, the Rio conference agreed to legally binding conventions on climate change and biodiversity. It agreed a declaration setting out clear principles for sustainable development, a declaration on the management of forests and, in Agenda 21, a framework for action carrying us into the next century. We also agreed to establish a Sustainable Development Commission under the United Nations to oversee the implementation of Agenda 21. My right hon. and hon. Friends played a leading part in the negotiation of these agreements. In particular, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment played a key role in negotiating a text on climate change which the United States was able to sign. The United Kingdom has been able to go further than the convention requires by making a firm commitment, provided others do so as well, to reduce emissions of CO_2 and other greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by the year 2000.

I was the first Head of Government of the G7 to commit myself to attend the Rio conference and to encourage others to do so. The results have not gone as far as some would wish. As in any initiative there have had to be compromises. The United Kingdom could have gone further on climate change than the convention provides. We wanted to see binding commitments on forests, but have, for the time being, to content ourselves with a declaration. But the undertakings that we have made are substantial. There is a firm commitment by all participants to further action.

There will also be a substantial commitment of new funds. The existing global environment facility will remain the sole multilateral mechanism for meeting obligations under the two new conventions. The Government support a $2 billion to $3 billion replenishment of that facility. We also plan to make available substantial financial resources, for conservation, biodiversity, energy efficiency, population planning and sustainable agriculture.

In addition to these agreements I launched three specific British initiatives. The first, the Darwin initiative, reflects our position as a world leader in conservation and the use of the world's resources of biodiversity and natural habitat. The initiative will place at the disposal of other countries the experience of, among others, the royal botanical gardens at Kew and Edinburgh, the natural history museum at London and the world conservation monitoring centre at Cambridge. The aim will be to carry out studies of available natural resources; to establish goals for research and monitoring; to develop inventories of the most important species; and to promote international co-operation and techniques for conservation.

The second initiative is for a partnership in global technology. The intention is to give developing countries better access to environmentally sound technologies, by sharing information and by direct contacts with British companies. To launch this initiative, we shall organise a technology partnership conference next year.

We were in constant touch with non-governmental organisations in preparing for the Rio conference and 12 representatives of NGOs and other organisations attended the conference as advisers to the British delegation. Their role has been a vital one in arousing public awareness and in offering expert advice. If we are to make real progress under Agenda 21 it is desirable for the NGOs to be fully involved. The third initiative, therefore, is for the United Kingdom to convene a global forum of the NGO community next year to build up their role in the next phase.

Before the conference, I paid brief visits to the United States and Colombia. President Bush and I discussed a wide range of issues, including some which will be raised at the President's summit with President Yeltsin starting tomorrow. We had a detailed discussion of the GATT round. We are both working for an early agreement. An agreement would be of enormous benefit to the world trading system, including, specifically, the developing countries.

My visit to Colombia was the first visit to south America by a British Prime Minister. Britain has a considerable stake in the country. We are the third largest investor; 22 subsidiaries of British companies work there. The recent BP oil find at Cusiana was the company's largest oil discovery for a quarter of a century. The purpose of my visit was to reaffirm our support for Colombian democracy, her market economy and her brave and successful fight against drug trafficking.

The Government are already contributing aid worth nearly £20 million to the fight against drug trafficking. It has had considerable success. Drug crops destroyed in Colombia represent lives saved in this country. I therefore reaffirmed our commitment to helping Colombia. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will visit the country later this year to assess the programme and how best to carry forward our help.

I agreed also with President Gaviria a number of initiatives to develop our trade relationship, and look forward to the President's visit to this country next year.

At the Rio conference, the countries of the world took on a substantial commitment to safeguard the environment on a global basis. In that respect, Rio was a milestone. Britain played a leading part in securing those agreements. A lot of work still remains. I am today writing to other G7 and European Community Heads of Government proposing that, at the Lisbon European Council and the Munich summit, we should adopt an action plan to carry forward immediately the agreements made at Rio. We have already gone a long way towards achieving a cleaner, safer world in which all of us share responsibility for our environmental inheritance. In that respect, Rio was a landmark.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): Does the Prime Minister recall that, at the end of the conference, the United Nations chairman urged Heads of Government

not to go away in a mood of self-congratulation? It is clear that that was advice which the right hon. Gentleman chose not to accept.

Will the Prime Minister understand that the success of the conference will be measured not so much by the declarations which it publishes, even less by the fancy names invented for initiatives, as by the actual result that it produces? That is particularly so when even the declarations turn out to be less positive than was originally hoped.

If, as the Prime Minister told us a moment ago, Great Britain could have gone further than the convention provides, why were we instrumental in weakening the wording of the climate convention? As the obligation to stabilise levels of greenhouse gases at 1990 levels by the year 2000 has been modified as an "aim", what effect does the right hon. Gentleman believe the declaration will have in practice?

How effective does the right hon. Gentleman believe the biodiversity convention will be without the support of the United States? Will he commit himself now to use what he tells us is his special relationship with President Bush to persuade the Government of the United States to change their mind? Will he make it clear this afternoon that he hopes that the United States will do exactly that? What sort of lead does he believe he is giving to the world by refusing to accept EC directives on protecting the environment and by destroying Oxleas wood and Twyford down simply to develop motorways?

Does the right hon. Gentleman support the dilution of Agenda 21 of references to the need for the rich countries of the north to reduce their consumption of resources? Does he share our view that the statement is deficient as it no longer advocates, as the first draft did, a call for a permanent ban on commercial whaling, nor urges a reduction in the number of nuclear power stations? Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that the Earth charter is a stronger or weaker statement than the Stockholm declaration, which was explicit about the effect on the environment of the continued production of nuclear weapons and nuclear testing? Why does the Rio declaration make no reference to the banning of the international trade in toxic waste?

Does the Prime Minister realise that one of the documents signed—I believe by the Secretary of State for the Environment—actually included a commitment to freedom of information? Does he propose to keep that promise, or is it indicative of his attitude of picking and choosing from the treaties according to the Government's convenience?

Does the Prime Minister understand that the real test of his commitment concerns his willingness to provide the essential resources that will turn public relations into practical policy? Can he give an explicit answer about the promises that he made to provide £100 million to support the aims of the summit—a subject on which he did not even touch this afternoon? Was all of that new money? Was any of that new money? Or is it simply a reannouncement of funds that have already appeared in public expenditure statements?

The Government are already suspect because of their attitude towards the writing off of the debts of developing countries. The Trinidad terms, about which the Prime Minister boasts so often, amount to little more than 1 per cent. of Government-to-Government debt, and there is no provision for commercial debts or debts to institutions.

The Prime Minister must understand that his commitment in this whole area will remain in question while this country's record on overseas aid remains at its present abysmal level. It is deplorable, but not surprising, that there is no commitment to achieve the United Nations target of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product. The Prime Minister boasts—as he will again this afternoon—that our contribution is about to increase from 0·27 to 0·31 per cent. It was 0·51 per cent. and rising when this Government came to office 13 years ago. Until that failure is rectified, no matter how often the right hon. Gentleman attempts to pretend otherwise, no one will accept that the Government are prepared to assist the developing world in a way that is essential if the environment is to be truly protected.

The Prime Minister: Even by the right hon. Gentleman's standards, that contribution was fairly graceless and ill-informed. I shall endeavour to deal with his points. He said that I was engaged in an exercise of self-congratulation, but if he had either read my statement, which was provided to him before I made it, or listened to what I said, he would have heard me expressly say that more needs to be done. It is difficult to draw from that any suggestion of self-congratulation.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to a dependency on results, and of course that is right. It is precisely what I said, not least when I spoke to the conference last week.

On the right hon. Gentleman's question about why the climate convention was changed, it was changed because, without the negotiating skills of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, there might not have been a climate convention to sign at all.

On the subject of Agenda 21, that represents a very high level of political commitment for integrating environmental concerns across a whole range of policies—industry, agriculture, land use. It gives a role to international bodies, national Governments, local authorities and businesses. It is a very far-reaching and worthwhile agenda.

The right hon. Gentleman clearly did not realise that the £100 million to which he referred is our portion of the replenishment of the global environment facility of $2 billion to $3 billion. It is new money, as I expressly stated last week and as I am happy to make clear again today.

On the question of the Trindad terms, I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman should be critical of what is the largest ever debt write-off for small countries and poor countries ever proposed by any Government. It was proposed by us, agreed with the Commonwealth, pushed through the United Nations and fought for by us through the Paris Club without a shred of assistance from the right hon. Gentleman, other than carping from the sidelines.

On the subject of the 0·7 per cent. commitment, it was expressly reaffirmed that we would reach that as soon as possible. I note with some interest that, although the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) may have talked about the 0·7 per cent. commitment for some time, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) makes no commitment whatsoever to moving towards it within any measurable time.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): In his talks with President Bush, did my right hon. Friend discuss the newly proposed Franco-German military force outside NATO?

[Sir Peter Tapsell]

If so, have any preliminary decisions been taken by Britain and the United States about our future attitude towards that force?

The Prime Minister: Yes, that was one of the matters that we discussed over the weekend. We both take the view that the Franco-German force should be part of the enhanced Western European Union, itself a part of NATO and primarily subordinate to NATO. We see the troop build-up, including troops from France and Germany, as being primarily at the instigation of NATO and of no other body.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): The good news about Rio is that it is a small step forward towards facing up to the environmental challenge that now confronts us all. The bad news is that, if this is the best progress we can make, we shall, I regret, be once again doing too little, too late. The good news about the Prime Minister is that he showed an early commendable enthusiasm for joining Rio. The bad news is that, when he got there, he was able to deliver so little.

The Prime Minister has told us that money is the root of all success, so is he happy that the total amount of resources available from the developed countries to tackle this problem now amounts to around a twentieth of what the United Nations estimates is necessary? Is he satisfied that, even after he has, as he promised, raised the percentage of gross domestic product to be spent on third-world aid and development, that sum will still amount to only slightly over half what his Government inherited in 1979? The Prime Minister tells us that he has made a start. Has he any idea how much further both he and his fellow world leaders have to go in order to face up to this challenge?

The Prime Minister: There is part of what the right hon. Gentleman said with I self-evidently agree, for I expressed the same thoughts myself earlier. It is a step forward. It is not as far forward as many of us would wish to go. I cited in particular forestry and climate change—both important areas where the United Kingdom would have been prepared to go further and faster than some other countries at the summit. The summit represents an agreement that has been signed by almost all the 170 nations. The right hon. Gentleman will know and understand the difficulties of getting an agreement that is satisfactory to everyone from a gathering of that size.

The true importance of Rio, apart from the agreements made, is the fact that so many countries and so many Heads of Government attended the conference, and that they have set a new benchmark on which to build co-operation in the future. It would not be wise to underestimate the importance of that. It simply could not have happened even two years ago; It has happened now. It has happened and it has delivered some success, although not as much as the right hon. Gentleman or I would have wished. It provides a benchmark on which to build in the future.

Resources are growing. There is the commitment of both developed and developing nations to use the resources for environmental purposes, which is required so that we can make more progress. As the right hon. Gentleman will know, some of the developing countries were unable to reach agreements on some of the areas in which agreement falls short of what our ambitions may be.

On the United Kingdom's commitment to aid, I point out to the right hon. Gentleman that we have the sixth largest aid programme in the world and arguably the best in terms of direction. It buys more in purchasing power terms than it has ever done, and that is what matters to the people receiving the aid.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): Will my right hon. Friend listen to those of us on this side who have taken a considerable interest in this question for a considerable time? We welcome his commitment and his involvement, and we welcome his statement and the fact that he has come straight back to the House to make it. Does he agree that, unlike the rather cavilling remarks from both Opposition parties, the truth about the convention and the agreements signed is that Agenda 21 is the real way forward, with 27 separate blueprints for action in many areas? As those blueprints are developed, the funds necessary to carry them through should follow. That is when we want to see the increase in resources. The resources will follow the plans agreed between developed and developing countries so that they can be funded to happen.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right about that. The follow-up is extremely important, and the follow-up mechanisms agreed under the United Nations will monitor that. That United Kingdom is well placed in that, because we already have an established system of annual White Paper reports such as no other developed or undeveloped country yet has. In Agenda 21, we have collectively produced a very flexible framework for countries developing their own sustainable development programmes, and for bilateral and multilateral discussions to see how those countries might be assisted.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the Prime Minister ask the relevant officials or Ministers to look at the proceedings on the Plant Varieties Act 1983, and especially at the debates on the amendments moved by Mr. Frank Hooley and myself in relation to plant breeding in this country, to the concentration of plant ownership and to the iniquity of the manner in which the third world and its biological and botanical resources were being used? When the Prime Minister has that report, will he send a letter to me about it? From those debates, it becomes clear the aspirations that the Prime Minister now expresses are not compatible with the Act which his Government put on the statute book.

The Prime Minister: I never cease to admire the hon. Gentleman's memory. I undertake to examine the clauses in the Act against the agreements reached over the past few days and then to write to the hon. Gentleman. I will do that with great pleasure.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): Would my right hon. Friend accept congratulations on his commitment and energy at the Rio summit? Does he agree that, to take things forward, a new structure for world trade is clearly vital? From his discussions with President Bush, does my right hon. Friend genuinely believe that the resistance so far shown by the American President has finally crumbled into acceptance of the need for an urgent resumption of discussions?

The Prime Minister: I am certainly seeking, as I have said both to our European Community partners and to the United States, a swift resumption of the direct discussions on GATT so that we may reach a speedy conclusion. I should have liked to see a conclusion reached before now. I should certainly like to see a conclusion reached by the end of the month, beyond which we run into timetabling troubles with the presidential election.

The matter is of immense importance, and the judgment that we make in the United Kingdom, especially after the agreement on the common agricultural policy, is that we are nearer an agreement on GATT than anybody realises or than anyone imagined just a few weeks ago. With good will, there is an agreement to be had, and I hope that all sides will come together and reach that agreement without delay.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): I certainly welcome the fact that, on this issue, the Prime Minister appeared to be following a different course from the Americans, and I hope that that trend will continue. However, I have a question about the Prime Minister's visit to Colombia. When he discussed matters of trade with the Colombians, did he raise the question of bananas? Is the Prime Minister aware that the Colombians and others are trying to swamp the European Community with dollar bananas after 1 January next year, to the detriment of our traditional suppliers in the Caribbean like the small country of Dominica, 70 per cent. of whose foreign exchange earnings are gleaned from bananas? Did the Prime Minister tell the Colombians that we did not want their rotten bananas if they were not prepared to pay decent wages to their workers? Can he confirm that he is still committed to the accord between the European Community and the banana growers about their supplies to the European Community after 1 January next year?

The Prime Minister: I did spend some time discussing bananas with President Gaviria and I had an opportunity a few days earlier of discussing them with Honduras and Costa Rica to follow up on earlier discussions with the Windward Islands and some of the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. There is a way forward to protect the access to Europe of South American bananas and to protect the position of the ACP countries, for many of which banana access to the European Community remains of vital interest for there is not easily to be seen another way in which they can sustain their livelihoods. I spent some time discussing that, and we are in touch with the Commission about how an agreement might be reached that would protect both parties to it.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Whatever the achievements of Rio, does my right hon. Friend agree that, without the serious issue of control of the growth of world population, the progress that is promised from Rio will come to nothing? What has the United Kingdom done to promote the control of the world's population through the Rio conference?

The Prime Minister: I made the point in Rio that population control was an important issue, although it also touches on deep moral concerns that are of great personal interest to millions of people around the world. We have a very substantial educative and birth control programme operating in many countries around the world, and that will certainly continue.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Could the Prime Minister tell us more about the Darwin initiative, because it sounds a little like the citizens charter—bland and ineffective? Does the Darwin initiative have a missing link and no teeth?

The Prime Minister: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has so little faith in the skill and expertise of the professional bodies in this country to help on questions like that. The essence of the Darwin initiative is to draw together and build on the United Kingdom strength in biology and taxonomy and to use the skills available at Kew and elsewhere—not least, of course, the natural history museum—in the interests of this country and of the world in general. We probably have more significant experience in legislative and regulatory protection of habitats, not least through the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission and the development of sites of special scientific interest, than almost any country in the world.

We expect the Darwin initiative to carry out preliminary country studies of natural resources and biodiversity in other countries and so help and advise those countries. We will clarify goals for them. We will promote international co-operation and benefit-sharing arrangements. That is just a dipstick sample of the sort of proposals that we have that will come under the general heading of the Darwin initiative. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will support it. Certainly the countries at Rio welcomed it.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): Would my right hon. Friend agree that it is simplistic for the Opposition parties to concentrate only on the amount of aid rather than the quality of aid, as the Government have done? Notwithstanding that, the amount of aid that the Government are proposing is a real increase, unlike the bogus figures proposed by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley).

The Prime Minister: It is simplistic, as my hon. Friend says, but it is also typical, as he will learn. We spent about £1,789 million on aid in 1991-92, which is 3 per cent. more than in 1990-91, and we plan to continue growing in real terms to £1,975 million by 1994-95.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): If the Prime Minister is so concerned about increasing expenditure on the poverty section of the world, when is he going to meet the United Nations target of 0·7 per cent. of GDP? Is it not disgraceful and hypocritical of him to go on, on behalf of his Government, to talk to the countries which are most vitally affected by poverty, which in turn is having adverse effects on the planet, when his Government are spending £10,000 million on Trident nuclear weapons and another £10,000 million on maintenance of those nuclear weapons——

Madam Speaker: Order. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he used the word "hypocritical"——

Mr. Cryer: Of the Government.

Madam Speaker: No, the word to me was "hypocritical" of the Prime Minister and his Government. If the hon. Gentleman would withdraw it and make quite clear what he is saying so that we have it on record and it is correct, I should be very much obliged.

Mr. Cryer: Well, the Prime Minister is part of a collective responsibility, so it applies to the whole collective responsibility, does the charge of hypocrisy, Madam Speaker. There is no question about that. They are all in it together, and it is hypocritical of the Government—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cryer: —to go to a conference like that being prepared to spend at least £20,000 million on the means of mass extermination. Why does he not go to such a conference by cancelling Trident and saying, "We are going to spend the money on preserving and developing the planet"?

The Prime Minister: Trident, although the hon. Gentleman has always signally failed to recognise it, is there to protect us and to deter others from attacking us. I remind the hon. Gentleman that it is because of the strength of our defence commitment that he has the opportunity to stand here and make his remarks about the Government. I look forward to his continuing to do so, because ever time he expresses his views in that way, it does no good to him, no good to his party and a great deal of good to us.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): On my right hon. Friend's visit to Colombia and the appalling problem of the spread of drug taking in the world, is not one of the great problems the fact that the peasant farmer in Colombia and South America gets much more money growing drug-producing crops than any other? Did the Colombians tell him whether the crop substitution programme was actually working?

The Prime Minister: Yes, we did discuss that, and the various measures that we were able to help the Colombians with to track down the drug difficulties at source and to eliminate the fields where the drugs were growing. It is not a problem that will be solved in the short term. They need a lot of help; they are getting a lot of help. They will need a lot more assistance, I suspect over a large number of years, before we can really get to grips with the problem and remove it.

The steady growth of United Kingdom assistance has not only led to much better training of indigenous police and military personnel seeking drugs but has been of great encouragement to the Colombian Government to produce their own resources to add to those provided by ourselves. It is a problem that will go on for a long time. One of the other aspects that the Colombians were very keen to emphasise would help them would be the increasing amount of investment from overseas to provide the better quality of life that lay at the root of my hon. and learned Friend's question.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Can the Prime Minister confirm that two of the principles that imbued many of the delegates at the conference were a belief in greater equality and a belief in the need for democratic co-operative planning—two principles which he will confirm are anathema to the modern Conservative party? Can he confirm that it is of no surprise to many of us that a party which has presided over great inequality between rich and poor in this country has done so little to bridge the gap between rich and poor internationally in the 1980s?

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that one lesson that we can learn from the way in which the environment has been degraded and the way in which so many people have had their lives threatened internationally, is that the problem will not be solved by the untrammelled operation of market forces?

The Prime Minister: On the substantive part of that question, the hon. Gentleman's view is not shared by Governments in Latin America or by Governments in eastern Europe. It is shared by few Governments, outside Cuba, anywhere in the world.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): As development aid of £1,800 million per year works out at a tax of more than £100 on each household in Britain, and at a time of world trade recession some of our households cannot easily afford that sum, is it not monstrous for Opposition Members to disparage it?

The Prime Minister: I believe that we make a substantial contribution in aid in terms of the size of our aid, the consistency of our aid, the quality of our aid and the direction in which our aid goes. It is uniquely well targeted. That is well understood by countries around the world. From time to time, the Opposition have called for an increase to 0·7 per cent. over five years. They have never mentioned to people that that would add £2,400 million each year to public expenditure, at a time when they have the nerve to lecture us about the borrowing requirement.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The Prime Minister knows that the value of aid programmes to the third world is largely negated by the appalling debt burden which those countries have to service. Have the Trinidad terms of which he has spoken been adopted by other donor countries? Were any further forums held and were proposals made at them to discuss debt alleviation during the programme in Rio?

The Prime Minister: The Trinidad terms have been adopted by several countries, although there are still some in the G7 which have not adopted them. I said last year that we would adopt them unilaterally if there was not a collective agreement in the G7 by the end of the year. There are still some difficulties with some countries. I hope and believe that we shall persuade all of them to adopt the Trinidad terms before too long, although some still have difficulties. Beyond that, we have to look at what is possible.

The Trinidad terms initiative builds on the Toronto terms initiative. They are the two largest debt initiatives taken anywhere in the world in the past 10 years. They are both British initiatives. The first was taken by Lord Lawson and the second was taken by myself during my period as Chancellor of the Exchequer. We shall look in future to see what more can be done, but we first need to ensure that all countries are signed up to the Trinidad terms initiative. Otherwise, there is a danger that we should go further and no longer be able to bring other countries or the commercial banks along with us. As was said in an earlier question, both of those are vital to assist the countries who need to see their debts progressively written off.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the prominence given at Rio to population growth as a cause of

environmental decline? Will he assure me that a greater share of the ODA's budget will be targeted on population policies? Will he encourage non-governmental organisations not to be so timid about investing in population planning?

The Prime Minister: On the latter point, we now have a better relationship with the non-governmental organisations than for many years. I will draw the attention of my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development to the first half of my hon. Friend's remarks. We shall be able to develop many of these matters with not only the domestic but the international NGOs. That is one reason why we decided to convene a conference here in the United Kingdom at some stage next year to bring NGOs from all over the world to discuss how the matter is developing and what further they and we collectively might do.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that at the Earth summit it was suggested that the third world, which still has to pay more to the rich part of the world in debt payments than it receives in other forms of assistance, needs $125 billion to run as fast as it can to keep standing still? If it was possible for the Government in the past five to six years to allow the top four clearing banks in Britain to write off debts—that is a liability on taxpayers—of more than £4,000 million, surely it makes sense, and the Prime Minister should have said it in Rio, for the Government to say that, instead of allowing the banks in Britain to write off debt, the British taxpayer should use the money to write off the debts of the third world? In that way, we should not have been handing out money to Maxwell and those other crooks in the City.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman really should not let his obsessions run away with him. In fact, many of the debts written off by the banks to which he now objects were third-world debts.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his leadership before and at the Rio summit was widely acknowledged—not, of course, by the armchair critics on the Opposition Front Bench, but throughout the developed and the developing world? That was not least because of my right hon. Friend's insistence that Rio was a first step and not an end in itself.

Following the questions put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) about population, does my right hon. Friend agree that Britain's contribution should be the expansion of opportunities for population control? That means not merely birth control but enabling children to survive, so that families in the developing world—and mothers in particular—have confidence in the survival of their children, and therefore do not see any need for families to be so large. Surely, that is exactly the sort of targeted, effective aid with which Britain can give a lead in the future.

The Prime Minister: Many of the problems of population control can be dealt with to a large extent by the provision of better education, both about population control and about the opportunities that are available to people in the third world. I suspect that one of the difficulties in many countries where families are often very large is caused by the fact that, to an extent, children on working land can represent wealth. Many problems are also caused by ignorance of the mechanisms of birth control: that is why I consider the international educative programmes so important.

Miss Joan Lester (Eccles): Talking of population control, the Prime Minister will be aware that Brazil has demonstrated a unique way of controlling its population over the years—by shooting children in the streets. I heard the Prime Minister say during a broadcast that he would raise the killing of Brazilian street children with Brazil's Head of State. Did he do that, and, if so, what was the outcome? Did any discussions take place with other countries outside the official meetings about how pressure could be put on Brazil to stop this barbaric practice?

The Prime Minister: As I believe the hon. Lady knows, there are two tiers of government with different responsibilities for caring for the street children. As I discovered whether I went to Brazil, many of the children have come down to the city from the Favellas that surround it. The climate is conducive to such action, and the children tend to leave their homes because they are deeply unattractive. There are many of them, and it is extremely difficult to deal with them.

I discussed the matters at some length with President Collor during our meeting last week, and he set out the scale of the programme to which he is committed—a programme totalling some $7 billion—to help the children. He described it as one of the Government's top priorities. The Government are seeking to take action, and to persuade the other tiers of government to do the same, although they are acutely conscious of what else needs to be done.

We are able to help in some ways, through the Government and also through non-governmental organisations bilaterally, and I hope that we shall do so. We have also invited Dr. Paulo Melo, the president of the Rio State Commission on the Assassination of Schoolchildren, to visit the United Kingdom to discuss the way forward. We may then be able to see what further action, if any, we can take.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the significant role that he played in the Rio agreements, which history will mark as a watershed in environmental action. Will he confirm, however, that sustainable, market-led economic growth is a precondition for environmental improvements, rather than an alternative to them? Will he also confirm that the success of the Rio summit will depend on detailed follow-up, country by country, of its provisions—which in turn will depend on the environmental monitoring machinery that is available in those countries? The machinery is good in Britain, but, sadly, not of the same quality in the rest of Europe.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right in each of his propositions. That is why the countries present agreed to establish a Sustainable Development Commission as the principal mechanism for the United Nations to follow up the agreements made in Rio. The essence of the commission's task will be to follow up commitments, and the details of how that can be done will be finalised in the General Assembly this autumn. Clearly —as my hon. Friend said—success will depend on the

[The Prime Minister]

political commitment of states. I hope that they will all participate at a high level, and I assure the House that we shall do so.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): Does the Prime Minister accept that the Agenda 21 proposals pale into insignificance in the light of the statement by the United Nations secretariat that $125 billion should be made available even by the end of the century? Has the Prime Minister anything to be proud of following his return from Rio, given that an inflow of $31 billion in debt repayments from the south to the north will continue?

In connection with tariff and non-tariff barriers, the third world is denied $75 billion, and each and every taxpayer in the United Kingdom must pay more than £6 for the folly—the criminality, almost—of banks that lent money to the third world in the 1970s.

The Prime Minister: I will not follow the hon. Gentleman into the obsessions of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), because I rather wonder what he would have said in the 1970s if the banks had declined to lend to the third world. These proposals are not, as the hon. Gentleman said, my proposals, but proposoals agreed by 170 nations and set out after a great deal of preliminary discussion prior to and at the conference. They point out that sustainable development is not, as the hon. Gentleman appeared to imply, the concern of Governments alone. Agenda 21 gives a role to international bodies, national Governments, local authorities, businesses, NGOs and individuals. All of them, not just Governments, have a role to play.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): The Prime Minister promised substantial extra resources, but just 10 minutes earlier his right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development announced a minuscule increase over the coming years. Who is telling the truth? What is the dipstick test for that?

The Prime Minister: Had the hon. Gentleman been listening to the answer that I gave a few moments ago, the answer to his question would have been clear to him. I announced an extra £100 million commitment to the global environment facility, a rising line of aid set out in public expenditure programmes and further resources to be considered as usual at public expenditure rounds.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Is the Prime Minister aware that 1 billion people, a fifth of the world's population, do not have access to clean drinking water, and that each year 3 million people, mostly children, die poisoned by their drinking water? What action did he take at Rio to reduce that total?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will find that problem addressed in the Agenda 21 programme, and he may care to examine it. There are a whole series of propositions in it.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn: (Islington, North): Does the Prime Minister accept that the past 10 years of the world's economic policies through the International Monetary Fund and the World bank have led to an unprecedented growth in the power and influence of multinational corporations? In that respect, does he not regret that the United Nations has closed its office that monitors the activities of multinational corporations, and that he and President Bush personally ensured that any reference to the activities of multinational corporations was written out of the text at Rio? Does he not think it is time that the world monitored those who control 80 per cent. of the world's trade, dump most of the world's toxic waste and destroy the environments of most third-world countries? Does he not think that they deserve some democratic accountability?

The Prime Minister: What the hon. Gentleman says about what President Bush and I allegedly wrote out of the text is absolutely nonsense. I do not know where he gets this rubbish from, but he should go back to his source and check again.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): In acknowledging the Prime Minister's role in Rio, will he tell us why Baroness Chalker allegedly choked on her pina colada when it was pointed out that the British contribution to overseas aid was down to 0·27 per cent. of our gross domestic product? Was that because she felt ashamed of that record? Does the Prime Minister in any way share that sense of shame?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is misquoting or misunderstanding what my noble Friend said. She was pointing out the difference between the calendar year issued by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the financial year figure——

Mr. Skinner: Come on, Brer Rabbit.

The Prime Minister: The Bolsover tar baby clearly does not understand that we carry out our particular public expenditure commitments on a financial year basis. During the financial year, the position was 0·3 per cent., as it has been. The outturn may be slightly larger. The 0·27 per cent. figure is simply because so much of the expenditure was in the last quarter of the year.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): The Prime Minister in his speech at Rio said that money was the root of all success. Can he give an absolute assurance to the House that the £100 million that he has promised to the global environment facility is new money and will not be taken from other parts of the overseas development budget? Considering the scale of the global development problems, is not £100 million—just 0·02 per cent. of our GDP—pitifully inadequate?

The Prime Minister: The agreement was for the replenishment, by $2 billion to $3 billion, of the global environmental facility. That agreement was reached by all the countries that were there. The £100 million is our share of that agreement, and that is why the figure comes to that. The time scale will depend on the speed with which the global environmental facility actually needs that particular sum, but, yes, it is new money.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Does the Prime Minister agree with the Secretary-General of the United Nations who said at the weekend that the rich countries have a vested interest in seeking solutions to the problems bedevilling the poorer countries? Vested interests aside, surely we should be talking in terms of principles. Will the Prime Minister assure us that his Government will continue to defend the interests of those ACP cane-sugar producing countries, particularly in the

Council of Ministers at Brussels? Some of the member states of the European Community seem to believe that they have no obligation to defend those interests.

The Prime Minister: In answer to the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant), I set out the position on the ACP countries and the difficulties that they face over bananas under the GATT round. I made it clear that we were keen to protect their position. They have no other obvious source of income in the short term, or even in the medium-term, and we wish to preserve their position. Clearly it is right to talk about having a general interest in the remarks of the Secretary-General. That is why so many of the developed countries have such large aid programmes.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Judging from his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), the Prime Minister appears to be unaware of the fact that, when a commercial bank writes down a debt in this country and claims corporation tax relief as a result, it does not at the same time have to cancel the debt to the developing country concerned. [HON. MEMBERS: "That's it."] As a result, the British taxpayer is subsidising the bank rather than the people of the developing world?

Does the Prime Minister not realise that, unless a far more serious approach is made to tackling the problem of debt than anything dreamed of in the Trinidad terms or beyond, we shall not achieve environmental progress or sustainable development throughout the developing world?

The Prime Minister: In so far as I could hear the question over the yapping coming from the Opposition Front Bench below the Gangway, the banks are writing off debt and we have put considerable pressure on them to make sure that they do write off the debt. It is important that they should continue to do so, and we shall certainly see that they do.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Given the Prime Minister's statements on population control, I wonder whether it is true that his Government have cut their contribution to the United Nations fund for population control by 63 per cent.

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that that is the case, and I think that the hon. Lady will find that out.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): How does the Prime Minister justify the role of the Secretary of State for the Environment, who lectured other nations at Rio on the need to improve the environment and to reduce emissions of poisonous fumes into the atmosphere, when at home he allows the use of orimulsion, the dirtiest means of generating energy? He has allowed its use without any restrictions on cleaning its emissions. Will the Prime Minister undertake to stop the use of orimulsion because of the damage it is doing to the atmosphere in this country?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman may know, all that is subject to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. He will also know that the United Kingdom has a comprehensive strategy for the environment, as set out in our White Paper, which is rolled forward annually. It is an open process with a commitment, a report, a review sequence and a public right to information on a scale that no other country has yet managed to equal. I must say that I find it extraordinary that Labour hon. Members are so often ever ready to run down what is done in this country rather than to acknowledge the lead that is so often given by this country, not least by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): As the Prime Minister knows, I spent a week in Rio, and I was fully aware of the build-up of hope and anticipation during that time. It was fuelled by the constant briefing of the press and media by Ministers and PR men. Did not the death of the Prime Minister's supposed good intentions take place in the meaningless platitudes, weasel words, caveats and smell of back-room fixes cobbled up by him and his aides at Rio? Is it not true that the failure to agree a target date for achieving 0·7 per cent. of GNP by the year 2000 can only mean that the burden of shouldering the environment and development crisis has been left to the world's poorest countries and people? Is not the message from the United Kingdom Government, "It's business as usual—carry on polluting, and carry on dying"?

The Prime Minister: If that is so, perhaps the hon. Lady can explain why the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) would not commit himself to any extra money whatsoever for that purpose. It is about time that the Opposition looked at their position before criticising the growing British aid programme.

Points of Order

4.26 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I rise to ask whether you have received a request from the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State for Social Security to make a statement on the revelation that the Government had intelligence information in the years before Maxwell's death that he was acting dishonestly. As those intelligence data were collected before 1989, the House needs to know why the Department for Trade and Industry granted an investment licence to two Maxwell companies in April 1988, which he later used to pillage those pension funds.

As those intelligence data were also presumably collected after 1989, how can the Government, including the Department of Social Security, not have known that Maxwell was dealing dishonestly with the pension fund moneys and therefore have been in a position to stop the plundering? Above all, we need to know why the Secretary of State, a week ago, misled the House—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must rephrase his statement. He knows that no Minister misleads the House, and I should be glad if he would withdraw his statement.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

Mr. Meacher: Of course I withdraw that phrase.

We need to consider why the Minister said:

"nor is there any question of Government accepting responsibility".—*[Official Report,* 8 June 1992; Vol. *209.* c. 23.]

In the light of that revelation, the Government clearly have a responsibility. Will you, Madam Speaker, secure an early statement so that we can have a full inquiry into the matter?

Madam Speaker: The first question that the hon. Gentleman raised was a matter for me. The point of order that he raised with the Chair was whether any Minister had asked to make a statement. The answer to that is no. That was a direct matter for me but, the other matters which the hon. Gentleman raises are for those on the Front Bench, who no doubt have noted his comments, and not for me as Speaker.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you received a request for a statement from the Secretary of State for Social Security about a conference on the Maxwell fund apparently to be held on Wednesday in Liechtenstein? I ask that question because I telephoned the Swiss embassy—it looks after that country's interests—to ask what is happening, and was told that such a conference is to take place in two days' time. I want to know from the Minister whether United Kingdom representatives will attend, bearing in mind that public money is now involved in trying to help the victims of that swindle. I have also been in touch with the pensioners who are affected—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman puts a point of order to me. He cannot put a question to a Minister through me. I have received no information from the Government that they seek to make a statement on the matter raised by the hon. Gentleman.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This concerns a matter that I have raised with you before, and that you treated with your characteristic courtesy. This afternoon, during Question Time, we had to suffer lengthy replies from those on the Front Bench. I know that you have commented before about these overlong answers to Back Benchers' questions. Could you impress upon those on the Treasury Bench the fact that many Back Benchers like to get in to ask questions, and that these overlong answers, these mini-statements, go down very badly with us?

Madam Speaker: I have already made a statement on that matter. Whether it is those on the Front Bench or those on the Back Bench, I think it is six of one and half a dozen of the other. Mr. Bennett.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I was not actually going to raise a point of order.

Madam Speaker: In that case, it was my mistake. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. If I heard you properly, you said that, as far as you were aware, no Minister had asked to make a statement about that crook Maxwell and the fact that the Government knew of some of his activities years ago, through GCHQ? Can we get this matter resolved? If the Government do not want to make a statement, which is scandalous, has anybody asked that a statement be made? If nobody has yet made that request, I am doing so now.

Madam Speaker: I have already made a decision on that matter, and those who have been interested and involved in it know the decision that I have made.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Last week, I raised with you a point of order about the work of the Select Committee on Social Security looking into the Maxwell affair. You undertook, on behalf of the House, to get together those on the two Front Benches so as to ensure that the Select Committee meets at an early opportunity. Today, the *Financial Times* reported that the intelligence services had information on the sort of activities that our Select Committee could examine. It could also bring the Secretary of State before it at the earliest opportunity to see what part the Government played in keeping from the public gaze the intelligence information about Maxwell's fraudulent behaviour.

Madam Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman refers to the statement that I made last week, he will see that I have already made known my views on the establishment of the Select Committee. I shall leave it at that.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This relates to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney). During the investigations by the Select Committee on Social Security into the affairs of the Maxwell pension fund, the Government gave no evidence about any security information on Robert Maxwell that they might have had. If they withheld that information, what sanctions can be taken against the Ministers who were responsible for those Departments at that time?

Madam Speaker: I have already on one occasion made it clear that that is not the type of advice that I am prepared to give across the Floor of the House.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to Statutory Instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments. &c.).

REVENUE SUPPORT GRANT (SCOTLAND)

That the Rvenue Support Grant (Scotland) (No. 2) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

LICENSING (NORTHERN IRELAND)

That the draft Licensing (Validation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Boundary Commissions Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

4.33 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The purpose of the Bill is to facilitate the work of the parliamentary boundary commissioners so that their reports can be presented in good time. The issue, as we all appreciate, is whether the next general election is likely to be fought on up-to-date boundaries or on boundaries that are nearly 20 years out of date. The Bill makes no changes in the rules for boundary revision that we adopt in our democracy because it is generally acknowledged that those rules work well. It gives effect to a timetable that hon. Members on both sides have been expecting the boundary commissions to follow for some time. The only arguments for opposition to the Bill will be arguments in favour of delay and of fighting a general election on out-of-date figures on population distribution. I trust that such arguments will not be advanced too strongly.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Clarke: I will, but I want to make some progress before I do so.

The essential background to the Bill is as follows. Since the current boundaries were drawn up, population changes have caused wide disparities in constituency electorates. Perhaps I may remind the House of how wide those disparities are. In England the figures range from just over 42,000 to more than 100,000. There are similar, although not quite as marked, disparities in the other parts of the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland has a span of 24,000 electors between the largest and smallest constituencies. The gaps between largest and smallest for Wales and Scotland are 41,000 and 55,000 respectively.

Obviously in Wales and Scotland geographical features combine to mean that some constituencies can legitimately remain smaller, but most of the disparities, including many that have developed in recent years, are simply the result of today's mobility of population which the previous statutory timetable did not recognise. The disparities in the numbers of voters in each constituency are unacceptable and they can increase extremely rapidly.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for giving way so early and I understand the point that he is making—but it is not just a matter of numbers. They may be the concern of the boundary commissions, but it is also a fact that in constituencies such as mine, where the electorate is down to 46,855—[HON. MEMBERS: "Bye bye!"] I can assure Conservative Members that it will not be "Bye bye" to me. The problems generated by those 46,000 people, however, are considerably greater than those of the 90,000 constituents in a Tory, rural, affluent area. Surely there ought to be some consideration of that.

Mr. Clarke: I would not attempt to deny that the borough of Newham suffers from a wide range of social

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problems which impose a considerable burden on the constituency work of its Members of Parliament. But it is a novel proposition to say that in deprived parts of the country a vote should be given twice the weight of that in another English constituency because of the workload imposed on the Member of Parliament or the problems faced by constituents. That proposition has never been taken into account before, and I am sure that the House will not want to introduce it in this Bill.

But for the proposals in the Bill there would be a serious risk of an election in 1996—a perfectly feasible date to contemplate—being fought on electoral figures that would be 20 years out of date. By that time the disparities that I have just described will have grown even greater. The Bill therefore sets a statutory deadline of 31 December 1994 for the completion of each of the four commissions' next reviews.

So as to ensure that these deadlines are achievable, the Bill also includes provision for the payments of commissioners. It sets out clearly the local government boundaries of which account must be taken in their reports. These two provisions are linked closely to the first provision, and between them they represent almost the entirety of what the House will be voting on this evening. I have no doubt that our debate will range a little more widely than that, but the Bill is a very narrow measure, mainly designed to make sure that the boundary review takes place within the reasonable time that we always expected.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Many of us will take the view that the contents of the Bill are not as surprising as the manner of its introduction. As Madam Speaker is the chairman of the four commissions, did the right hon. and learned Gentleman inform her, before introducing and publishing the Bill, of the Government's intentions—and what reply did he receive?

Mr. Clarke: Madam Speaker, like her predecessors in office, is indeed chairman of the commissions and, like her predecessors, she will take no active part in their work. Below her is a High Court judge in each of the four countries. He is an active commissioner sitting with two other commissioners appointed by the Government after consultation, usually with—among others—the Opposition parties. I am sure that the role of the Speaker of the House is to ensure that if there ever were—there never has been—an allegation of impropriety in the conduct of the commission, the Speaker might become active. The Speakership has not been active hitherto, and it is not contemplated that it will be so as a result of the Bill. As a matter of courtesy, I informed Madam Speaker about the introduction of the Bill. She noted that and thanked me for my courtesy. Beyond that she has taken no part whatever in the drawing up of the legislation.

I do not agree with the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) that there is anything surprising about the introduction of the Bill. It has appeared in the House so quickly after being mentioned in the Queen's Speech because of the timetable which sets a statutory deadline of 31 December 1994. The Bill must be enacted reasonably quickly to make sure that no practical reasons get in the way of that deadline.

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there is widespread dissatisfaction in England and Wales about the over-representation of Wales and Scotland? People feel that it is undemocratic. What action would he need to take to ensure that the same basis for representation applied to Scotland and Wales as applies to the rest of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Clarke: Primary legislation would be required to change the legislation setting out the number of seats available to Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. We have decided not to do that because the disparity about which my hon. Friend complains has been in our system for a long time, although it may have widened a little in recent years. As we all know, from time to time, there is lively debate about the constitutional position of Scotland, in particular, and, to a certain extent, that of Wales. The Government's view is that a proposal that solely determined the number of seats in Scotland and Wales would not be helpful to the debate.

That underlines my argument that the Bill, which in a sense is a modest constitutional measure to be debated on the Floor of the House, where it should achieve as wide a consensus as possible, is restricted to what is necessary to achieve the timetable. We have deliberately eschewed the suggestion to enter upon larger issues. The number of seats allocated to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is a wider issue and should not be taken as part of the legislation.

I emphasise the extent to which the Bill leaves untouched the mechanisms of the boundary commissions. Some reports have suggested that we are gerrymandering or doing something like that. Such things are said in the heat of the moment, but that is a preposterous suggestion, because the Bill goes out of its way to leave the rules and the mechanism untouched, precisely because I am not aware of any serious complaint about the impartiality and fairness of what is done at the moment.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): The issue of gerrymandering could have been resolved at the outset if the Minister had followed historical precedent and called inter-party talks before producing the Bill. Why did that not happen either at a Speaker's Conference or in some other forum to enure that the Bill could be supported by all parties and that there would be no suggestion of gerrymandering?

Mr. Clarke: If the Bill's time scale is to remain practical, we must enter quickly on the legislation. I clearly recollect politicians of all parties speaking and writing articles in the expectation that the timetable that I am describing would be realised. We are merely making sure that the statutory deadline matches the expectations of most hon. Members. If we had suggested changing the rules or the distribution of seats, or anything of that kind, we would probably have required the historical precedent of a Speaker's Conference. Unless something surprising arises in the debate, an argument, if there is one, about the statutory deadline of 31 December 1994 is hardly the red meat of constitutional debate that would justify a Speaker's Conference.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way once more and then I should like to make more progress.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): First, will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the boundary commissions are impartial? Secondly, will he resist any accusations that are made by Labour Members about gerrymandering? I remember that in 1969 the then Labour Government refused to implement the recommendations of the commissioners because they felt that they would lose up to 30 seats if they did so.

Mr. Clarke: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. I have never heard it seriously suggested that the work of the boundary commissions is anything other than impartial. Our system must be the envy of many of the major democracies of the western world. It is implemented by a High Court judge and I do not think that there can be any claim of partiality.

This is the fourth revision since the system started, as I shall briefly describe. The two reports that were made during periods of Labour Governments gave rise to considerable controversy. In 1969 the then Home Secretary, now Lord Callaghan, went to considerable lengths to avoid implementing the boundary changes before the 1970 general election. My position is slightly ambiguous, because, had it not been for Lord Callaghan's gerrymandering on that occasion, I probably would not have been elected to the House in 1970. I had been selected to fight a constituency that was next door to my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) which was due to be redistributed out of sight following implementation of the report. Lord Callaghan was so anxious to see my right hon. Friend and myself in the House that he delayed the process and I was elected to this place to represent a constituency that was subsequently redistributed.

When we last had a review nobody claimed that it was anything other than impartial. We behaved perfectly properly in our response to it and we propose to do so again. It helps no one to claim that reviews are not impartial.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall explain how we have reached the present position and then I shall give way.

Over nearly 50 years we have had four reports from boundary commissions. They are required periodically to produce reports on all the constituencies in their respective parts of the United Kingdom. This will continue to be the case. In addition, the commissions are able to conduct interim reviews should they consider that the need to alter constituency boundaries is so pressing that they cannot wait until the next general review. This option, too, will continue to be open to the commissions.

On reaching conclusions in any given area, each commission publishes its proposed changes with its reasons for arriving at those conclusions. It then waits for a statutory period of at least one month for representations to be made. If objections are raised by a body of 100 or more electors or by an interested authority, the commissioners are obliged to hold an inquiry in the area concerned. They may choose to hold an inquiry even if these conditions are not met. I have never heard it suggested that such inquiries are anything other than full and fair. Detailed reasons are given for whichever course of action the commission eventually decides to follow.

The procedures via which the boundary commissioners arrive at their conclusions are an essential part of our democratic system. There is no compelling need for any changes in the rules which I have outlined and no changes are proposed in the Bill. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) has underlined, the boundary commissions are an invaluable part of our constitution and one which the Government have every intention of maintaining.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): How does the Home Secretary align his immediate remarks with the information that was sent to Members in the newsletter from the boundary commissioners? The commissioners wrote:

> "It is too early to estimate when the report will be completed but it is unlikely to be before mid-1995."

If the right hon. and learned Gentleman is saying that the procedures of consultation, a public inquiry and everything else will be carried out and the date is to be brought forward 12 months, how can what he is saying and what the commissioners have said be reconciled?

Mr. Clarke: The date will be brought forward six months before the estimate to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. Before the Bill was introduced no one was quite sure when the process would be completed. The modest extra resources that the Bill will enable us to put into the exercise of providing remuneration for the commissioners will enable them to speed up their work. The Bill provides clarity about the impact of any local government changes on the revisions and provides a cut-off date after which local government changes will not be taken into account. That, too, will enable the commissioners to meet the statutory deadline of 31 December 1994. If, by any chance, they slip beyond the statutory deadline, that will not invalidate the conclusions. I believe that, following the Bill's enactment, the statutory deadline will be hit.

Timing is the only issue. Looking back over the process, as I have briefly done, the only drawback that has caused controversy in modern times is the time that has elapsed between each review. The disparities between the sizes of electorates have become intolerable. A vote in Kensington is now worth twice as much as a vote in Peterborough. There is no logical reason for that, but it is not an isolated example. The constituency of Eastleigh has more than 91,000 electors on the 1991 register; it had only 70,000 on the 1976 register. Similarly, during that time my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's constituency electorate has risen from 65,000 to 91,000; Hampshire, East has risen from 67,000 to 91,000; The Wrekin from 65,000 to 91,000; and Swindon fromn 68,000 to 90,000. I could go on.

Such dramatic increases have been matched by similar decreases in electorates compared with the time when constituencies were given their individual Members. Chelsea had an electorate of 63,000 in 1976; that is now down to 42,000. Indeed, the smallest constituency is, surprisingly, Surbiton. Such swings in population of almost a third of the electorate in some constituencies over a 15-year period show that the current time scale is too protracted for today's mobility of population.

The House has made several efforts to get the interval between reporting times right. In the 1950s, a reporting time period of between three and seven years was found to be too short. There was considerable controversy about the haste of the report in the early 1950s. We subsequently found that a reporting period of between 10 and 15 years is too long for the 1990s. For those reasons, the Bill

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proposes a time scale of between eight and 12 years between general reports of the boundary commissions. By that means, we should avoid some of the past difficulties.

In 1939, constituencies ranged in size from 15,000 to 150,000 electors. That was recognised as unsatisfactory, so four permanent boundary commissions were set up in 1944, one for each component part of the United Kingdom. The brief of those commissions was to produce comprehensive proposals for the redistribution of parliamentary constituencies every three to seven years. There was an initial report in 1947 and the commissions reported again in 1954 on a periodic review that had lasted little over 18 months. That caused controversy, so the time scale in which they had to report was extended by legislation in 1958 to between 10 and 15 years. That framework for review, consolidated by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, is largely that which remains with us today. However, for the reasons that I have given, the procedure is thought to span too long a time.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the problems is that the quota year is not the year in which the report is presented? There is already a built-in obsolescence in the electorates. Should not the time scale run from the year of quota rather than the year of the report? That would ensure that that problem was minimised.

Mr. Clarke: The quota year must be set before the process starts and it must be adhered to throughout the general review as it continues or it would be unfair to those countries dealt with in the early stages compared with those dealt with in the later stages. The quota year is 1991, which the English Boundary Commission is using. As it has already produced its proposals for a number of counties, it would not be practicable to change the quota year. The timetable for review should be based on the gap between general reviews, which is what we are proposing, rather than on a new timetable starting from a quota year.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The quota year is 1991, but there is a shortfall of 1·88 million electors in the estimated relevant population of people entitled to be on the voting register. Although some of those are overseas visitors, there is still a shortfall of 1·5 million electors in England, Scotland and Wales—but not in Northern Ireland. Therefore, it would be sensible to get the electoral register correct and then to move quickly into the quota figure and the reviews.

Mr. Clarke: We go to considerable lengths to make sure that people register. We have compulsory registration, which we back up with expenditure, advertisement and effort to get people on to the register. We achieve about 95 per cent. registration, which is a little lower than the historic level. The discrepancy has widened a little, but that pre-dates the community charge. We have achieved considerable success in getting people on to the register. The Government will continue their efforts to make sure that registration is maintained at a high level.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does it not appear that some local authorities have been over-successful, in that it appears that at the last election there were about 11,000 dual entries in some constituencies? I do not know what one can do about that.

Mr. Clarke: The rules are clear. It is for the electoral registration officer in each area to make sure that the job is carried out satisfactorily. We hear complaints from time to time about dual registration—about people who have not been removed from the electoral register because it is assumed that they are still in the constituency, despite the fact that they have not sent in the form. One hears allegations that universities send in lists of everybody who is supposedly in residence, including people who are not British citizens. By and large, however, despite all the anecdotal complaints that one receives from individual constituencies, I think that our registration process is better than that achieved in most parliamentary democracies, if not all. We achieve a success rate of about 95 per cent.

I intend to describe what the Bill aims to deal with. The number of interventions shows that the Government have been modest about what they have chosen to do. We have given the Bill a very narrow compass. It contains three main provisions, designed to put the position over the time scale to rights. Clause 1 provides that commissioners can be paid for their services. It has to amend schedule 1 to the 1986 Act to do so. At present, members of each commission give their services free of charge. However, assistant commissioners are paid for the work that they do in holding local inquiries where these are warranted and in preparing reports of the inquiries for the commission to consider.

That is an anomaly nowadays. Each commission employs eminent people from the legal profession and public administration to undertake its work. It is only fair that the reward of such people should recognise, as far as possible, the skills that they bring to the task.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Is not one of the reasons for the delays, particularly as the commission undertakes the reviews, the fact that the Lord Chancellor allows the judge the chance to work as a commissioner only every six weeks? That is probably because his work is unpaid. Is there any provision in the Bill that would allow the Lord Chancellor to be more reasonable about allowing a senior High Court judge time off to get on with the work of being a commissioner?

Mr. Clarke: Lord Chancellors are always reluctant to release High Court judges from their duties for excessive periods. However, before the Bill was produced I consulted the Lord Chancellor. He knows what the statutory timetable is. He will therefore have to ensure that the commission's work is not delayed. The hon. Gentleman is right, however. One of the biggest reasons for delay is that the commission tends to meet only once every six weeks to continue its work. The High Court judge will not be paid over and above his High Court salary, but remuneration of the other commissioners will make it fair and reasonable to expect more frequent meetings to be held, if necessary.

Clause 2 refers specifically to the timing of the general reviews of constituencies that the commissions are periodically required to undertake. It has no bearing—this is an important point—on the interim reviews that may be

undertaken at any stage, where the need arises. Clause 2 states that the next reviews of all four commissions are required to be submitted by 31 December 1994. On the present time scale, the report of the Northern Ireland commission would be due, under the statutory limit, in 1997. Those in England, Scotland and Wales would be due in early 1998. I have already made it clear why we cannot wait for those ultimate statutory deadlines and that they have to be changed.

The new deadlines will set an achievable and practicable target. The English commission started its general review in February of last year. The Scottish commission started its review in February of this year. Both commissions should be able to complete their reviews in time, given adequate resources. The remaining two commissions have yet to start their reviews, but they are confronted with smaller tasks. Furthermore, there is a provision in the Bill, which I have already mentioned, that failure to submit a report on time will not serve to invalidate the report subsequently submitted. That takes any undue pressure off the commissions and ensures that their democratic procedures will not be circumvented to abide by these deadlines, if it is unavoidable that their reviews come in late. It also provides a safeguard in the event of delay because of unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances. As I have said, in addition to the deadline for the next review, the length of time between subsequent reviews will be reduced to between eight and 12 years.

Clause 3 clearly sets out the local government boundaries that the commissions should take into account when completing their general reviews. The extent to which they are required to consider local government boundaries will remain as set out in the 1986 Act. Clause 3 simply specifies the latest date by which the commissioners can reasonably be expected to take account of changes in local government boundaries. It is necessary to include that provision because, as we know, local government boundary changes are in the offing in all parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Clarke: I give way first to my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) who represents the smallest English constituency.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. and learned Friend may be out of date, because I think that Kensington fell below my numbers in the general election.

What will be the position on the London boundaries, especially the Greater London boundaries, as Greater London no longer exists since the abolition of the Greater London council? My right hon. and learned Friend is no doubt aware that the Local Government Boundary Commission has recently carried out a review, which will ultimately lead to a report by the commission, which says that, in many places, the Greater London boundaries are wholly unreal. There is a suggestion that a commission charged with more responsibilities than the Local Government Boundary Commission should correct that. Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell us something about the approach of the parliamentary review to that point?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend's point concerns the extent to which the parliamentary boundary commissioners might cross local government boundaries if some of the local government boundaries are, in my hon. Friend's view, no longer appropriate. The rules will remain unchanged by the Bill. The rules enjoin the commissioners to have regard to county council boundaries and to borough boundaries in metropolitan areas, but that is not absolute. The rules permit the commissioners to cross either borough or county boundaries where it is reasonable for them to do so to avoid unacceptable discrepancies in the size of the constituency or to enable them to get constituencies closer to the electoral quota. I appreciate that that may be an issue in London this time, but it will be a matter for the boundary commission.

Mr. Maxton: Will the Home Secretary explain how the Scottish Boundary Commission will operate in relation to clause 3? As far as we are aware, the Government intend to publish a White Paper on the future structure of local government in Scotland in September. There is no intention to introduce legislation in this Session, so there will be no legislation to reform local government in Scotland before October 1993. The Bill to introduce the new structures would hardly have passed through both Houses before the boundary commission's final date for putting its boundaries into place. How on earth is the Scottish Boundary Commission going to operate when it does not know what plans the Government have for the future structure of local government in Scotland?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is right. We do not yet know the legislative timetable for any local government reorganisation in Scotland, although my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has already announced his intention to have some reorganisation, and everyone expects some reorganisation in local government there.

If we are to keep to a sensible timetable for parliamentary constituencies, there must be a deadline before which it is reasonable to expect the parliamentary commissioners to take account of changes to be made and after which it is not, unless one is to have interminable delay waiting for an evolving process of local government change.

The timing of the Scottish legislation is not within my gift; it is all yet to be decided. My right hon. Friend will introduce his proposals in due course. The Bill makes clear what will happen in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland if local government changes take place.

For example, for the forthcoming review which is to be completed by 31 December 1994, the latest date by which changes in local government boundaries would have to take effect to feature in the final report would be 1 June 1994. We have made a provision for the sake of the Boundary Commission for Wales which provides that, for the forthcoming review only, that commission should take account of any boundary changes that are included in an Act of Parliament passed by 1 June 1994 even if those boundaries are not operative by that date.

The effect of clause 3 is to make it abundantly clear to each commission which boundaries are to be taken into account for each review. Interim reviews can still be conducted if it is felt that a local government boundary change becoming operative subsequent to a boundary

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commission report has such significance that it warrants alteration of parliamentary constituencies before the next general election.

The purpose of the special provision for the Welsh commission is to allow for the strong possibility of a Welsh local government reform Bill. Were such a Bill to be passed by Parliament before 1 June 1994, the need for interim reviews would be reduced by the fact that the new boundaries had been incorporated in the previous general review. Wales is more advanced than Scotland because it has already produced a Green Paper. People are already aware of the general shape of reform in Wales.

Mr. Maxton: What about Scotland?

Mr. Clarke: Scotland may proceed more slowly than any other part of the United Kingdom on the present timetable in respect of local government change.

In addition, as I have already said, the possibility remains for all four commissions to conduct interim reviews on any section of their part of the United Kingdom, whenever the need arises.

This simple and modest Bill is designed to keep the work of the four boundary commissions in the United Kingdom to the expected timetable. The current disparities in constituencies are intolerable and a similarly undesirable situation could arise in future. Therefore, the Government propose that the forthcoming reviews are kept to time and that the time scale for subsequent reviews is tightened. In order to make that feasible, the Government have proposed that funds should be made available for the payment of commissioners and have set out clearly the framework of local government boundaries on which the commissioners should base their work.

That is the full extent of the Bill. It is a rather mechanical Bill for what I have described as a constitutional measure. No changes are proposed for the successful mechanism by which the commissions reach their conclusions. All recommendations and their reasons will continue to be made fully available to the public and time will continue to be set aside for local inquiries if so warranted.

I believe that the United Kingdom is fortunate to have a system that works so well and to have commissioners who succeed in keeping themselves free from political controversy. It is only unfortunate that the current timetable for reviews has proved not to match the present-day movement of population. That is the only inadequacy that the Bill seeks to address.

5.6 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): At the beginning of his speech, the Home Secretary described the measure as a constitutional Bill of sorts. I suppose that it is the only item of constitutional reform that the Government will initiate during the life of this Parliament. A Prime Minister who believes in a classless society has no proposals to make about an elected second Chamber. A Government who proclaim that they are concerned about democracy will continue to misuse the royal prerogative to avoid decisions in Parliament. There will be no consideration of electoral systems, not even the almost obligatory consideration of how we elect our Members to the European Parliament. There will be no examination of what I believe to be the justified demands of Scotland and Wales for devolved government.

The item of constitutional reform that I most regret that we shall not debate is the issue of parliamentary or Government patronage. I should have welcomed hearing the Secretary of State tell the House what special virtues led the Government to nominate Lord Waddington as Governor of Bermuda. Was it his intellect, his diplomacy or his well-established affection for the people of the Caribbean?

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): All of them.

Mr. Hattersley: That is about as credible an analysis as it is possible for the Minister to provide.

In the absence of a debate on genuine constitutional matters, we must make the best of what we have. It has been widely suggested that the Government have introduced the Bill in the squalid hope of party gain. I must tell the Home Secretary that, as a general rule, I find that proposition attractive. However, I believe that that proposition does not apply with its usual force to this particular and peculiar piece of individual legislation. I believe that in practice there is very little for the Government to gain from the Bill in terms of party advantage.

Clause 2, which creates suspicion, provides that each of the boundary commissions for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland must report by 31 December 1994. Under present legislation, the English, Scottish and Welsh commissions are not required to report until 1998; the Northern Ireland commission is not obliged to make its submission until October 1997. Therefore, the argument runs, a Bill which requires a report almost four years earlier than is now obligatory is intended to change the boundaries to the Government's advantage before the next general election.

I am sceptical about that analysis, for a number of reasons. First, under present legislation, although the boundary commission is not required to report until 1998, it is empowered to report as early as 1993. I am one of those people whom the Home Secretary quoted who have never doubted for a moment that, with the present Government in power, the boundary commission would report at an early date, and that even without the Bill its revised proposals would be in place in time for the next general election. That is the conclusion that we should come to on the evidence.

The boundary commission announced that its general review had begun in January last year, and it has already made a number of provisional recommendations for 17 English counties. I repeat that the idea that without the Bill we shall fight the next general election on the present boundaries seems to me to be simply a mistake in judgment. One way or another, the boundaries will be revised before we next go to the polls.

There is a second reason why commentators have predicted that the Bill is politically motivated. They, mostly commentators outside the House, have judged that the result of a boundary commission's work would in some way benefit the Government. In fact, I do not believe that it is possible to come to any sensible conclusion about what the pattern of constituencies will be. That is because the pattern will be determined area by area, not for the

country as a whole, and the eventual outcome will result from initial proposals, appeals and then revisions of initial proposals. Therefore, I say with the due humility and trepidation necessary in anyone who corrects and contradicts Mr. Jeremy Paxman that the conclusion that "Newsnight" came to on Friday does not bear very much real examination.

The Government may obtain some advantage from the Bill, but no one can be certain of that. I make my position absolutely clear. For my part, since I believe that we are to have a general review before polling day, I much prefer the new boundaries to be established well before the general election rather than immediately before it. Having already allowed party politics to intrude into the debate, I hope that I may be forgiven for putting the matter in this way: as a member of a party which expects to win a large number of marginal seats at the next election, I believe that we have everything to gain from knowing the boundaries of those marginal seats as early and as quickly as possible.

One of the reasons why the Government's motives have been suspect is because the Bill was presented, as the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) suggested, not only without consultation with the chairman of the boundary commission but without the usual—indeed, until now, invariable—consultation with the other parties. The previous major change in the rules governing the boundary commission was introduced in 1958 with a speech in which the then Home Secretary, Mr. R. A. Butler, said:

> "The Government naturally thought it right in this matter of constitutional importance to discuss the proposals we had in mind with the other parties."

The present Home Secretary, in one of the more disingenuous passages of his speech, seemed to suggest that a change in the period over which the revisions were made did not justify consultation among the parties or, indeed, with the chairman of the Boundary Commission. However, the 1958 revision—about which, I repeat, Mr. R. A. Butler said:

> "The Government naturally thought it right in this matter of constitutional importance to discuss the proposals we had in mind with the other parties"—

was exactly this sort of review. It was a review of the period over which the boundary commission should revise the boundaries. Because of the new arrogance of the Tory party, such consultations have not taken place in the past 13 years on any of the matters which are appropriate for consultation between the parties in ademocracy.

I must say to the Home Secretary—*[Interruption.]* I hope that I can catch his attention for a moment. I was hoping that the Home Secretary might play some continued part in the debate. It is interesting that, before I had to call for the Home Secretary's attention, I was dealing with the new arrogance of the more junior members of the Tory party. I was saying that by their refusal to consult the Opposition parties on matters of constitutional importance, the Government damage themselves, damage democracy in Britain and damage the status of politics, which is diminished by such attitudes.

Mr. McCartney: Is not the Government's position even more dangerous when the Select Committee unanimously recommended that no change should be made in the time scale for the reporting of the boundary commission? The Government have rejected not merely consultation with the parties which make up the House, but the advice of the House in its last report on the matter.

Mr. Hattersley: As my hon. Friend will understand, I support that view in this sense. While the changes should be acceptable and should not be opposed, the manner in which they have been introduced into the House is not intolerable—we have no choice but to tolerate it—but it is an improper way of conducting government. I hope that the Government will mend their ways in the years that lie ahead.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I apologise to the right hon. Gentleman for the fact that I was distracted by a *Hansard* note. As he commented on our arrogance, I hope that at this late stage in his Front-Bench career he will not slip into the pomposity and self-importance of some of the senior members of the Labour Front-Bench team. I hope that he will confirm that it is clear from what he just said that if we had spent some time consulting on the timetable of which I have spoken, he would have agreed with it. As far as I can tell, it is a matter of no controversy, and any consultation would have been superfluous on a Bill in which we seek to sustain the momentum of the review and not to slow it down.

Mr. Hattersley: The suggestion that I have only just slipped into the habits of pomposity and arrogance is one of the kindest that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has ever made. That aside, his point is really my point. There would have been agreement between the two Front Bench teams. With some qualifications, which I shall advance in a moment, we should have said that the measure was a sensible revision of the constitution. I repeat, however—pompous or not, and arrogant certainly not—that when constitutional reform is contemplated in the House there is a good case for allowing the major parties to discuss it. Not only the Government and the official Opposition but the minority parties have an interest and should have been consulted.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): As my right hon. Friend has stated, there is general acceptance among Opposition Members, as there is bound to be, of the need for boundary changes. No one would seriously argue against that. However, should we not suspect the Government's motives, bearing in mind that the Bill was trailed almost immediately after the Government were elected to office on a greatly reduced overall majority? In the last Parliament, overseas voters who had had absolutely no connection with the United Kingdom for many years were given a vote. That was obviously sharply politically motivated. In view of all those factors, and bearing in mind what my right hon. Friend said about the lack of consultation with the Opposition, why should we not be worried about what the Government seek? They seek 10 to 20 extra seats in time for the next election.

Mr. Hattersley: I can only answer my hon. Friend in this way. If the Government seek 10 to 20 extra seats, first, the Bill will not produce that result and, secondly, they could have obtained that result in a different way, even without passing the Bill, by ensuring that the boundary commission reported immediately before the general election. That was certainly within the power of the Home Secretary.

I made it clear that if the Government had chosen to discuss with the Opposition parties the intervals at which the boundary commission should report, there might well have been agreement between us. Clause 2 of the Bill

[Mr. Hattersley]

proposes to reduce the interval from between 10 and 15 years to between eight and 12 years, but there are no precise rules by which we can determine the proper period for revision. By nature, such matters are judged by rule of thumb—by guess and estimation. It is necessary to avoid too frequent disruption, but it is also essential to ensure that, within each of the nations which make up the United Kingdom, the constituencies approximate to the same size and, in consequence, each vote has approximately the same weight and value.

I do not believe that this is a matter of constituency burdens; I do not believe that it is a question of the work done by the individual Member of Parliament. Some Members of Parliament, owing to the nature of their constituencies, will have to do more work than others. The important criterion for constituency size is the weight of the vote. I was delighted to hear the Home Secretary endorse the view that that cannot be equal among all the nations of the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland, for instance, inevitably contains constituencies that are appreciably larger than those in Scotland.

Mr. Dunn: But not larger than those in England.

Mr. Hattersley: Of course not. The hon. Gentleman is simply extending the point that I have made, and I am pleased to have his support. We have always accepted that constituencies should be of different sizes in Ireland and Scotland, England and Scotland, and Wales and Northern Ireland. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] For reasons endorsed by the Home Secretary—because of the different problems of representation of the three nations of the United Kingdom. Hon. Members must pursue their prejudices with their own Home Secretary, who said explicitly that the rule should continue. That is certainly our view, but it is also our view that within each nation constituencies should be of approximately the same size.

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): The right hon. Gentleman regards it as obvious that there should be differences. Will he explain the reasons for that?

Mr. Hattersley: The geography of the constituencies is the obvious example. I represent a constituency two and a half miles long and one mile broad. That does not pose the problems for democracy that representing constituencies such as Western Isles poses for my hon. Friends.

Mr. Dunn *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I do not intend to give way as often as the Home Secretary as I want to make progress on what both he and I regard as a comparatively modest Bill. Conservative Members who want to argue their prejudices against Scotland must do so with their own Home Secretary, whose views on these matters are identical to mine.

Mr. Rooker: Will my right hon. Friend allow me to put our prejudice the other way around? The problems of rural deprivation are hardly ever raised in the House because the burden of representing a large constituency prevents Conservative Members from representing their constituents properly. Otherwise, they would not be so quiet about the matter.

Mr. Hattersley: We plumb deep waters. I propose to continue my remarks about the Bill, which—dare I say—deals with a rather narrower point.

The population is now more mobile, and shifts more quickly, than in 1958. I am therefore prepared to believe that the review period ought to be reduced. Ideally, I should like a fixed review period of 12 years but, as I have said, there are no absolute rules to govern and guide us. The eight to 12 years period recommended by the Government is near enough to being right to make outright opposition inappropriate, if not to justify support. It has the special advantage of having been specifically recommended by the deputy chairman of the English boundary commission, who suggested it when he gave evidence to the Select Committee on Home Affairs.

When all the processes—provisional recommendations, public consultation and final proposals—are completed, the review period will always span two general elections, and will usually span three. If we are to maintain our present electoral system—as I believe that we should, for reasons which, despite temptation, I shall not go into this afternoon—it is essential that each elector realises that his or her vote is of approximately the same value and weight as any other vote in the nation in which the vote is cast.

Clause 1 of the Bill deals with the remuneration of members of the commission. That, of course, is necessary, and we support it. I should make it clear to the Home Secretary, however—I have touched on this before—that we expect the commissioners and those who work for them to be appointed in the normal, non-party political way. We also expect the practice of consultation about such matters to be reintroduced. That should, and will, happen. The Government, no less than the Opposition, have everything to gain from a visible demonstration of the commission's impartiality, and we shall expect the Home Secretary to do everything in his power to ensure that that is the case.

Finally, our principal and substantial reservation relates to clause 3, which deals with the boundary commission's work in relation to local government boundaries and contains at least one provision that we shall attempt to amend in Committee. The clause deals with the rules by which the commission's deliberations are guided. Rule 4 of the guidance note stipulates that counties and London boroughs are convenient units within which to conduct reviews. Rule 5 allows those boundaries to be ignored if, by respecting them, the commission would be forced to create constituencies with electorates which show what the rules describe as an excessive disparity from the normal numbers.

If clause 3(1), lines 30 and 31, are passed into law, the commission will be allowed to take into account boundaries which the Local Government Commission is no more than contemplating. For the boundary commission to base its work on what might be, but is not yet, a county or borough boundary will lead to much confusion. It also places the Local Government Commission in a wholly invidious position. In effect, the Local Government Commission would do its work in the knowledge that what it decided would, at least in part, determine constituency boundaries at the next general election. That is not Sir John Banham's proper role. Nor do I believe that it is one that he wants to occupy. The role would be dangerous for the Local Government Commission and for the boundary commission itself.

The size of the constituencies is at least to some degree determined by the size of the electorate. I hold the view

that there are too many constituencies. That is a wholly personal view. I accept that it is not a popular one among Members who have spent years fighting to get here, have just arrived and, naturally, assume that if there were a reduction, they would be among those Members to fall by the wayside. If we are to retain a total of 651 Members, it is important that the commission should pay proper regard to the serious democratic problem of under-representation.

For a variety of reasons, despite the changes that have made late registration possible, electoral roles demonstrate an increasing failure of voters to register. The Home Secretary rather brushed aside a deficit of about 5 per cent., but 5 per cent. makes a substantial contribution to the result in most constituencies—although not in mine, I am happy to say, where it would have to be 10 times greater to affect the result which brought me here. In most constituencies 5 per cent. one way or the other on the electorate is the difference between success and failure for individual Members of Parliament. Indeed, 5 per cent. determines the Government of the country. In any event, all the evidence is that because of double registration the real shortfall is more like 7 or 8 per cent. than 5 per cent. The problem is particularly acute in the inner cities and on urban estates.

The boundary commission has a duty to take account of that effect when drawing up its recommendations. That is particularly important in the light of the certainty that massive registration campaigns will be held between now and the next general election—in effect, changing the size of some constituencies by 5 per cent. or more.

Those more or less technical observations having been made, I conclude as I began: I do not believe that my right hon. and hon. Friends should oppose the Bill. If it gives the Government any advantage—and that is by no means certain—they would obtain that advantage in another way which is less convenient to all the political parties fighting the next general election. Therefore, I am perfectly prepared to see the Bill receive its Second Reading. We shall look with great interest at the point to which I referred under clause 3. If clause 3 is not amended to avoid that strange complication of the Local Government Commission influencing the decision of the boundary commission, we shall have to reconsider the matter carefully on Third Reading.

5.28 pm

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I am glad to have this opportunity to make some brief remarks in support of the Bill. I shall touch upon some of the points made by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). I agree with him that we should control the growth in the number of hon. Members in the House, and I shall refer to that later.

The question of parliamentary boundaries is extremely sensitive, first, because it directly impacts upon local traditions and allegiancies and, secondly, because it hangs the sword of Damocles over the heads of individual Members. As has been said, the Select Committee on Home Affairs considered the issue of the redistribution of seats in 1986-87. I shall base some of my remarks on that detailed inquiry.

Under our first-past-the-post system, it is essential to maintain the principle of parliamentary democracy by a regular review of the shifts in constituency populations. If the balance of seats in the House is to reflect the opinion of the country as a whole, the fact that constituency sizes vary from 101,784 electors to 23,073 must be a matter of concern. The principal point of the Bill is to require the boundary commissions to complete their work before the end of 1994 so that the general election in 1997 takes place on the basis of a more equitable distribution of seats. If there are any delays, it would be nearly 20 years since an impartial review of this issue.

The Select Committee's report was designed to stabilise the growth in the number of seats in the House. I take up what the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said about that. In this century, the number of seats has increased from 603 in the period from 1918 to 1935 to 651 in this Parliament. It is undesirable that the commissions should allow any further increase.

There are also considerable disparities in average electorates between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. There are obvious political difficulties in altering those disparities. They owe as much to the origin of the United Kingdom as to boundary commission rules. Rule 1 requires that Scotland shall have no fewer than 71 seats, and Wales no fewer than 35. But that leads to Scotland and Wales being over-represented, with average electors for each Member of Parliament being 54,171 and 58,382 respectively, as against nearly 70,000 for England.

I contend that it is inconsistent with the existence of the Union of the United Kingdom and our system of parliamentary democracy that the votes of electors in two of the constituent parts should, as a matter of course, carry greater weight than those of the electors in the remaining parts—England and Northern Ireland. That is the position under existing law and, as far as I can judge, that disparity is likely to continue. Therefore, I urge my right hon. and learned Friend to give careful consideration to that, because most people in the different parts of the United Kingdom are of mixed descent and I can see no validity for such disparities to continue.

Those differences cannot be justified be geographical considerations. As a matter of common sense, relatively isolated areas, such as Orkney, the Shetlands and the Western Isles, can be over-represented, but the exception cannot apply, in this age of modern communications, to the whole of Wales and Scotland. There is no moral justification why a vote cast in a Welsh constituency should be worth more than one cast in England or Northern Ireland or why a vote cast in Glasgow should be worth more than one cast in Manchester.

It is sometimes suggested that Scottish over-representation has as its basis the Act of Union 1707, when Scotland was allocated 45 Members in the enlarged Westminster Parliament. Incidentally, 45 is probably what the representation should be today, but it was agreed at a time when England and Wales had 513 Members of Parliament. That over-representation in Scotland cannot be justified on any basis and seriously distorts our system of parliamentary democracy.

Mr. Dunn: If my hon. Friend wants to take a purely political view, may I remind him that, in the 14 elections that have taken place since 1945, the Labour party has had a majority in England on only three occasions, including 1945?

Sir John Wheeler: My hon. Friend makes a valid political point, but I have based my case on the value of votes in each constituency of the four parts of the United Kingdom. This issue should be considered on that basis.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): If the hon. Gentleman's argument is logical, does he agree that the distribution in London, with London boroughs, which leads to some 40,000 voters in Twickenham and more than 100,000 in Hornsey and Wood Green, is equally obnoxious?

Sir John Wheeler: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because I was about to come to that point.

I also wish to mention clause 3 of the Government's narrowly defined Bill. If we are to achieve a better balance in the number of electors in each constituency, the commissioners will have to disregard local government boundaries. I think that that is the hon. Gentleman's point. It has been the practice not to cross boundaries of London boroughs and that has resulted in a less complicated relationship for London Members of Parliament, particularly as London has a single-tier system of local government, which serves it particularly well.

However, the time has come to adjust that policy. When doing so, the commission should have regard to making a London constituency as socially cohesive an entity as possible, with a similar consistency of population, social and economic status, as well as housing ownership. Nothing is worse than a constituency in an urban environment made up of populations of different social characteristics, one of which is in conflict with the other. Subject to that proviso, the question of the London borough boundaries as envisaged in clause 3 must be revisited.

Mr. Rooker: I may have misunderstood the hon. Gentleman. Is he saying that, by and large, the building blocks for constituencies should be socially and economically homogenous and should not contain the variety of experience and life that exists in this country? Is he saying that we should not have constituencies with extreme wealth at one end and deprivation and poverty at the other, so that the Member of Parliament representing the area can speak with one voice for the whole of his constituency, as demanded by our single-Member constituency arrangement?

Sir John Wheeler: I am glad to have given way to the hon. Gentleman as I know that he takes an informed interest in this matter. He seems to have misunderstood the message that I sought to convey. In any urban constituency there is bound to be a great variety of life, with many differences between the citizens. The point that I was making was that a boundary commission, in establishing its urban and inner-city boundaries, should seek to do as much as it can to ensure the cohesiveness of constituencies and to ensure that the Member of Parliament is best able to represent the people who live in it. That is subtly different from what the hon. Gentleman was saying.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I am a little mystified about what my hon. Friend described as cohesiveness. Surely as much geographical compactness as possible is the best criteria to follow. I wondered why he did not follow up the point made by the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), who suggested that Twickenham has an electorate of 40,000 when it is substantially more than that, and that Hornsey and Wood Green has a constituency of 100,000 when it is substantially less. Is not accuracy vital in this matter?

Sir John Wheeler: Of course accuracy is vital when one establishes constituencies. If there is to be a change in the methodology of establishing London constituencies, the House has to consider the injustices that arise in the method used for establishing the constituencies in Scotland and Wales, which is the point to which I referred earlier.

I commend the introduction of the Bill and its narrow objective. I have touched on some of the issues that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency and which I believe to be essential for parliamentary democracy. I welcome the Government's initiative in introducing the Bill.

5.40 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I missed the London boroughs by one—I meant those of Hackney and of Kingston upon Thames. The figures published in the review in 1983 in *The Times* show the vast differences not only in the London area but in different parts of the county.

I have to declare an interest in this matter, because I was involved in the legal case in 1983 and I still practise as a barrister. The 1983 case, which went almost to the House of Lords, was that the boundary commission, which had begun its deliberations in the mid-1970s, had got it wrong because it used counties as skins and divided the constituencies into them, rounding up or rounding down depending on how it felt.

There was also a series of anomalies in the 1983 results that affect what happens in clause 3. Clause 3 makes matters far worse than they were in 1983 because, to put it bluntly, the situation is wide open to manipulation by anybody who knows what he is doing.

The object of the exercise must be, as the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) said, parity of value. We both served on the Select Committee on Home Affairs in 1986, and he knows my views on this matter as well as I know his. My view is that Scotland and Wales have particular problems. I voiced it in Committee then, and I stand by it today.

The hon. Gentleman may also recall the furore that broke out in 1986 when the threat was that the number of Scottish seats would be reduced from 72. It is obvious that, with areas such as the Orkneys, the Western Isles and the great empty spaces of central Scotland, it is necessary to have smaller electorates because there are physical limits to what a Member of Parliament can do.

Looking at some of these proposals, I wonder what the commission is up to this time. In the redistribution in Leicestershire, it has created a seat which appears to have no boundary and which is 50 miles long. That is ridiculous. The seats in Leicestershire can be redistributed, and I am certain that the agents of the Conservative party will be looking at that and briefing counsel to appear at the appropriate inquiry.

When one looks at clause 3, one has to ask: what is meant by "local government boundary"? Which boundaries are we talking about? Are we talking about the existing district and country boundaries or about the metropolitan boundaries? Are we on the rolling review

programme that is getting rid of the metropolitan county of Avon? Are we talking about the proposed new county boundaries? That would create an enormous problem.

The city of Bristol might, for instance, be put in a new county rather than the Avon metropolitan district area on which the old boundaries were based. The constituencies might be redistributed so as to annex various rural areas which always alter the nature and quality of parliamentary seats—and which party has a better chance of winning them? That is not likely to happen in Birmingham, except on the borders—but what will become of Birmingham as a city? Will it go to Warwickshire or with part of Staffordshire? If the local government boundaries are taken to be the new county boundaries, that will dramatically affect the redistribution—but the Bill tells us nothing about that. No definition is offered.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said, lines 30 and 31 take on a whole new meaning. In Lancashire, Merseyside metropolitan county council is gone, replaced by five metropolitan districts. One of them, across the water in the Wirral, may return to Cheshire. What will happen to the others? Will they go back to Lancashire? Will the boundary commission keep Lancashire as redrawn, taking in part of Cumbria; or will the local government authorities of Sefton, St. Helens and Liverpool remain the relevant entities?

The Home Secretary will be well aware—he is a man who knows about these matters—that the split as between rural and urban areas can alter voting patterns in an area. Some examples thrown up in 1983 were disgraceful. On a whim, the boundary commission kept Cambridge as a single constituency but divided Oxford in two, annexing rural areas to it. We all know the result: three Conservative seats in 1983. Now the Oxford seats are divided one apiece between the parties.

Colchester offers another classic example. The town is an entity but, by dividing it in half and attaching parts of it to rural areas, north and south, two Conservative seats are created. One thinks of the divisions of Swindon, Reading and Plymouth. These matters can be arranged in all sorts of ways that do not serve democracy.

The hon. Member for Westminster, North made a telling point—that we should at least try to attain some cohesion. I have attended enough inquiries over the years to have heard the commission say more often than I care to remember that it has to bear in mind a community of interest. What on earth is meant by that? I can understand that a town or a part of a city has a community of interest; I can understand that a rural area may have one. But how is a community of interest to be maintained in Colchester if the town is divided in half? The same applies to Oxford. This a gerrymanderer's charter.

Along with other right hon. and hon. Members, as a lawyer I fought the last commission's hearings before the inspectors. We all know how it is done: people get together with the vicar and the local historical society and various other interest groups and parade witnesses who sound rather appealing and convincing. The commissioner, who has probably come from chambers in London to a place whose whereabouts he did not even know before he was given a map, listens judicially. Many commissioners are honest and honourable men, but if the numbers can be made to seem right, the desired decision can be obtained. I appeared at the Sheffield, St. Helens, West Yorkshire, Doncaster and Leicester inquiries, and I know that this can be done, but it does not really give us an honest result.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I am listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman. I represent a town which was split in 1974 and again in 1983. Chunks of the rural area—that is the phrase the hon. Gentleman used—were added to my constituency purely on the basis of the numbers game. The hon. Gentleman forgets that the number of people in inner-urban and inner-city areas tends to diminish. My town was shedding people from its centre and had to take in rural areas. If it is any comfort to the hon. Gentleman, I can tell him that, under the new proposals, I shall lose 20,000 of my rural constituents, which will make my constituency a marginal seat again. However, I won it in 1979 with a majority of 246, and I have no fears about winning it again.

Mr. Bermingham: The hon. Gentleman makes my case. A community of interest must be defined, and we must try to make a seat reflect its area. No doubt the Home Secretary will be advised on how the inquiry will be conducted. That is perfectly proper, but he and many other hon. Members know exactly how such inquiries are conducted. The boundary commission is not consistent. As the Americans have proved, the tolerance in an electoral district is about 1 per cent. All the seats in Northamptonshire are Conservative, although there is a considerable Labour vote there. All seats but one in Liverpool are Labour, but there is a considerable Conservative vote in that area. Neither case can be justified.

If the Bill had been drawn a little wider, it would have provided an ideal opportunity for an electoral result that represented the votes cast. That cannot be obtained if the skin is drawn too tightly. The hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) knows that, shortly after the 1983 election, I asked the commissioner at a meeting in Oxford whether the county councils were the right skin. The Commission's proposals for Leicestershire and Devon stick to the county council areas. Will the use of the term "local government area" result in a dog's dinner at the end of the redistribution?

I understand that, although some metropolitan districts will return to the shires but will remain local authorities, the Government will allow the commission to take the greater area. That will mean that Lancashire may contain parts of Cumbria and certainly its seats. That is at least four metropolitan districts. If the area is taken in its entirety, constituencies will cross metropolitan districts. There is a precedent for that, because Tynebridge crosses the river and is within two metropolitan districts. In the 1983 case, the Court of Appeal said that that was an exception. When we said that that could have been done in London to make the distribution of the seats more even, we were told that it could not be done.

There is a risk that different sets of rules will apply. If London retains its borough boundaries for seats, the rounding-up and rounding-down effect will apply. That will mean that 2·6 seats will become three seats. But a rounding down occurred in London in 1983, from 2·49 seats to two seats. That led to two large seats and three small ones in adjacent boroughs, and that cannot be right

[Mr. Bermingham]

or fair. If an area has a larger skin than a shire county or a London borough, a seat that is more equal than others in numbers of constituents will be created.

I am extremely worried about the size of electoral rolls in particular areas. I understand that the commissioners will use the 1991 return, and as we all know that is horrendously wrong. There are those who are not on the register—for various reasons, some people have failed to register. During the general election—I am sure that all hon. Members experienced this—we heard it said, "I am not on the register. What can I do about it?" If people are not on the register in April 1992, they will not be on it if we return to the October 1991 count.

I ask the Government to say that the boundary commissions should be told that they should take into account the known registration errors. In its own way, that will affect the size of parliamentary seats, their number and how they are distributed. In an urban area, for example, there may be 5 per cent. or 10 per cent. non-registration. That means that, when the register is brought up to date, the extra 5 per cent. or 10 per cent. will take the seat well outside the tolerance levels, as it were, before the other parts of the process even begin.

Mr. Barnes: There is a set of figures that could be used to correct the under-registration of 1991, which was supplied to me in written answers on 6 and 11 February. The figures show the electoral registration in England and Wales, and are accompanied by comparative estimates of populations. The figures show that there is a shortfall in each district. Such figures are also available for Scotland on the basis of parliamentary constituencies, and in each constituency there is a shortfall: in one constituency it is about 5,000. The figures are slightly excessive because they include some overseas visitors, but in general they point more to those who should be on the register than to those who were actually on it.

Mr. Bermingham: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. He has underlined the point that I was trying to stress. If the real number of electors is 5,000 more than the number which is shown on the electoral returns, the seat may still be within the guideline of 67,000 or 68,000. That means that it would not be necessary to alter the boundaries of the seat. On the other hand, the real figure may take the number of electors way above the constituency norm, and it may be necessary to move a ward from that seat into an adjacent seat.

I understand the political implications of these matters, but if we are to start on the basis of fairness and equality of numbers, which should be the commissions' primary concern, we must do the proper ground work and get it right, which means having electoral registers that are up to date and reflect the true electorate in particular areas. If the commissions begin their deliberations with inaccurate registers, that will be a recipe for disaster. As I have said, until someone defines for me what is meant by "local government boundary", I shall not rest easy in my bed.

5.59 pm

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): I am grateful for the opportunity to deliver my maiden speech. In keeping with the tradition of the House, I shall commence by paying tribute to my predecessor, Sir Anthony Meyer, a tribute which I am sure will be fully endorsed by my constituents.

Sir Anthony first entered the House after the 1964 general election as the Member for Eton and Slough. When he made his maiden speech on 10 November 1964 he spoke of his predecessor, Mr. Fenner Brockway, in a manner which uncannily is a fitting tribute to Sir Anthony himself following his retirement from the House about 28 years later. He said:

"I know that Mr. Brockway was not always an uncontroversial figure, but I assure hon. Members that in Eton and Slough he was widely loved, loved not only for the way in which he spent himself for his constituents but also because, over and above being a great constituency Member, he was a citizen of the world, not always a very orderly citizen and sometimes perhaps rather unwise, but always conscious of his duty to humanity at large and to suffering humanity in particular." [*Official Report*, 10 November 1964; Vol. 701, c. 889.]

Sir Anthony's sense of duty to suffering humanity was never more apparent than during the floods that devastated Towyn and Kinmel Bay two years ago, when thousands of people were driven from their homes by the raging sea. Sir Anthony and Lady Barbadee were in the sea physically helping to rescue the many elderly and disabled people who live in that area, as well as helping the very young. Sir Anthony's commitment to the well-being of those unfortunate people in the aftermath of the flood was no less equally total. As a constituency member, Sir Anthony Meyer was a model example.

Having mentioned the disaster that befell many of my constituents, I wish to place on record my admiration for the local authorities, the police, the rescue services, the voluntary organisations, the Welsh Office and its agencies, British Rail and the many individuals who have contributed to restoring the devastated area and to returning life to normality for the residents of Towyn and Kinmel Bay.

Clwyd, North-West is a small coastal constituency which stretches from Rhyl in the east through Abergele to Colwyn Bay and to Rhos-on-Sea and beyond. Although those popular tourist centres are the mainstay of the local economy, the small cathedral city of St. Asaph and Rhuddlan, with its Norman castle, are also key attractions for visitors.

It is worth noting that a significantly higher proportion of the people of Clwyd, North-West are of pensionable age —some 28 per cent., compared with an average of about 18 per cent. in the remainder of Wales. It goes without saying that people get wiser as they get older, which helps to explain why Clwyd, North-West is the safest Conservative seat in Wales—and in the context of this speech, long may it stay that way.

During the 1980s, the people of the county of Clwyd took full advantage of the opportunities presented by Conservative policies and they are now well placed to build on those opportunities during this decade. The decline of traditional industries and their trade unions in north-east Wales has been matched by the flowering of new industries with new technologies and new ideas. It has been a transformation, which has also been seen elsewhere in Wales. Economic benefits have no boundaries and, unlike the Labour party, we recognise the industrial revolution for what it is—a continuous process of change, innovation, new technology and the adaptiveness of working people.

In the national health service, the people of Clwyd are poised to benefit from the groundwork of the 1980s. Many general practitioner practices are already fund holders and Glan Clwyd district general hospital has already applied to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales for NHS trust status. In education, the constituency's schools are already reaping the benefits of the local management of schools and there are strong signs that some will apply for grant-maintained status.

I said earlier that my predecessor, Sir Anthony Meyer, first entered the House in 1964 as the Member for Eton and Slough. He lost the seat in 1966, but returned to the House in 1970 as the Member for Flint, West. In 1983, the boundary commission recommended that the coastal wards of the Colwyn borough, previously within the Denbigh county constituency, together with the boroughs of Rhuddlan and Rhyl—previously part of West Flintshire—should be included in the new constituency of Clwyd, North-West. Those proposals left the constituency with a 1981 electorate of slightly more than 61,500. The separation of Rhyl from nearby Prestatyn was regarded as less than satisfactory, but the commissioners argued that to have included Prestatyn within Clwyd, North-West would have led to an imbalance in the electorates of the remaining Clwyd seats. The position in 1992 is that Clwyd, North-West has an electorate of 67,350, about 9,000 more than the electoral quota.

As the House is aware, on 3 March my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales announced proposals for fundamental changes to Welsh local government that will have a bearing on the report of the Boundary Commission for Wales. My right hon. Friend's proposal was to replace the present eight county councils and 37 district councils with 23 unitary authorities, which will be responsible for almost all local government services. I want to say how much I welcome my right hon. Friend's bold and imaginative initiative, following the constructive and positive approach of Welsh local authority associations. I want also to say how welcome is the extended period of consultation that my right hon. Friend has given to local authorities in this matter. The removal of one tier of local authority bureaucracy, unclear responsibility and anaemic accountability will be welcomed throughout the land.

Equally welcome is my right hon. Friend's rejection of demands by the opposition parties for an Assembly in Wales. On the one hand, the Welsh nationalists would have an Assembly to be used as a stepping stone to full independence. On the other, the Labour party—cynically—would have an assembly to be a talking shop for their new army of redundant councillors. The Liberal democrat is the usual muddle in the middle.

The people of Wales are no more persuaded by those demands, transparently motivated by political self-interest, than they were in 1979 when similar proposals by the then Labour Government were overwhelmingly rejected in a referendum.

The full extent of the great reforms of the 1980s relating to trade unions, education and health will, I believe, become more and more apparent during the 1990s. They are already in place, so time will tell. The reform of local government will have equally profound and beneficial consequences towards the end of the century and beyond. Getting local bureaucracy off the backs of the people will be justly rewarded by a grateful electorate.

6.8 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): It is both a privilege and a genuine pleasure to follow the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards). He paid felicitous tributes to his predecessor, Sir Anthony Meyer, who is well remembered in this House and whose independence was always admired. His will indeed be a hard act for the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West to follow. Controversy of a party nature was not introduced into his maiden speech, and he has left the House in no doubt that he is likely to be less rebellious and to give less anxiety to the Patronage Secretary than did his predecessor. That in no way vitiates what was an admirable speech. The hon. Gentleman described in graphic terms some of the problems and achievements of those who live in his very beautiful constituency. I hope that he will have many opportunities to grace these debates and to bring his own angle of vision to bear upon them.

The Second Reading of the Bill follows hard on the heels of the general election. General elections throw up much evidence of what is wrong with our electoral system. That upon which the Bill focuses is perhaps less in the minds of many members of the public than other features of the recent election, which they might reasonably look to Parliament to legislate on while the memory is fresh. Many will regard the decline in the number of those on the electoral register as a matter not to be passed over as lightly as the Home Secretary passed over it in his speech. When he dealt with that question, he showed a complacency that bordered on the partisan. I hope that the Government will not sit back and just accept the under-registration of the electorate which so distorts the ultimate outcome.

During the recent election, many other matters of administration gave rise to comment upon which we might have expected there to be legislation, or at least some clarification. For example, there is confusion about the polling card. I found that many of my electors believed that it was necessary to carry the card with them to the polling station in order to cast their vote. At least an active campaign—if not legislation—to make clear the purpose of the polling card is necessary, if that confusion is to be avoided.

Matters that affect the postal vote might be regarded as having at least as high a priority as the matters contained in the Bill. The Home Secretary spoke of the greater mobility of the British public. That affects people and their place of residence not just when it comes to the work of the boundary commissions, but from day to day, from week to week, from month to month. It should be much easier to obtain a postal vote. Legislation may be required to ensure that application forms for postal votes are easily obtainable within just a few days of the announcement of a general election. Like the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), I did not expect the Government to introduce a fundamental constitutional Bill. Most certainly the Bill is not that. I did not think that they would address the easiest way to deal with the disparity in the value of a vote.

The example given by the Home Secretary was that the vote of a voter in Peterborough was half the value of a vote in Kensington. I do not expect the Home Secretary to address that question by introducing a system of proportional representation. That would be a fundamental

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reform. However, I regret the fact that the Home Secretary has not even considered entering into discussions with other political parties about the issue. I believe that at a stroke it would eliminate most of the problems that the Bill is designed to correct. We should not have what is becoming an increasingly unsatisfactory system of boundary determination which, however this House tinkers with it from time to time, will continue to produce distortions.

Mr. Barnes: Proportional representation advocates the principle of one person, one vote, one value. The problem is that not everybody has one vote. Before we consider the question of one person, one vote, one value, would it not be logical to get the electoral register right? Even under proportional representation, the electoral register can result in distortion. PR could lead to distorted results in a referendum. If, for example, the Danes had had a different electoral register, the result could have been different.

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Gentleman knows that that was my first point: that there is a serious deficiency in the electoral register and that the Government ought to introduce proposals to deal with it.

To return to the wider question of electoral reform, however much we tinker with the present system there will continue to be great disparities. For over a quarter of a century I have represented a constituency with a third as many electors as those in some of the larger constituencies. I am naturally extremely conscious of that discrepancy, although I have no doubt that under any system of election there will be difficulties over the problems caused by sparsity of population, such as those that prevail in the highlands and islands of Scotland.

My constituency extends over some 2,800 square miles, with not the best of communications. The hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, spoke of the desirability of equalisation and of modern communications overcoming these problems. He ought to travel around some of the remoter parts of the British isles before he comes up with pronunciamentos such as that.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I endorse entirely what the hon. Gentleman says, particularly about geographical disparity. Does he join me in welcoming the fact that when this matter was raised at the last Scottish Question Time the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), who knows something about the geography and other considerations, took an entirely different view from that espoused by the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler)?

Mr. Maclennan: Yes, that is fair. So, indeed, did the Home Secretary. I think that the Home Secretary found that there was a certain restiveness on the Back Benches while he gave the reasons for retaining the status quo vis-a-vis Scotland and Wales in their relationship to England. I do not go so far as the Home Secretary. If we moved towards a federal system of government, there could, in my view, be a more equal relationship between the value of the vote cast in Scotland for the federal Parliament and the value of the vote cast in England. I commend the Liberal Democrat party's proposals, which were described by the former Secretary of State for Scotland, Mr. George Younger, as the most logical and coherent of the proposals that had been put forward for the improvement of the government of Scotland.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Can the hon. Gentleman tell the House why the Liberal Democrats did so appallingly badly at the last election? Was the reason for the poor result the Liberal Democrat party's support for proportional representation, or its support of federalism, or both?

Mr. Maclennan: I quarrel with the hon. Gentleman's premise. The Liberal Democrats in Scotland returned to the House with nine Members, which was not far short of the Government's number. A degree of modesty about the Conservative party's achievements in Scotland is certainly in order.

The reality is that the Bill has been introduced in an unceremonious and ill-considered fashion. I interrupted the Home Secretary, who was kind enough to give way in his usual manner, to ask him what consultation he had had with the chairman of the boundary commission who is, as a matter of fact, Madam Speaker. He replied that he had notified her of the Government's intentions.

It is an unsatisfactory arrangement that the chairman of the boundary commission should be merely notified of the Government's intentions. However courteous such a notification may be, it smacks of pure formality. I believe that the chairman of the boundary commission should have a more than formal role, especially as the chairman of the boundary commission is also Madam Speaker. By her presence as chairman of the boundary commission she in some way symbolises the very independence of the commissions.

Mr. Rooker: I disagree with that point. The fact that the Speaker of the House is the chair of the boundary commission prevents hon. Members from criticising the boundary commission in a serious and hard-headed way, simply because it may be misconstrued as an attack on the Speaker. The fact is that the Speaker plays no role in the commission and does not attend the meetings. I believe that the Speaker should have no role and should not be the chair of the boundary commission. The boundary commission should be up front with a positive role. If it did things with which the House disagreed, we should not then be prevented from complaining about it.

Mr. Maclennan: I do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman, nor he with me. I am speaking about what I believe the presence of Madam Speaker as chairman conveys emblematically. It conveys a sense of the independence and of the irreproachability of the commissions. Like the hon. Gentleman, I do not think that the appointment is desirable. Those bodies should be at arm's length from the House, although also open to scrutiny and cross-examination by the House before the House decides whether to accept or reject the boundary commissions' recommendations. The hon. Gentleman and I are not alone in that view.

The Hansard Society for Parliamentary Government produced a report last year which was commended by Sir Barney Hayhoe, whose elevation to another place has been noticed, as worthy of considerable and careful study by all interested in parliamentary matters. The 1991 report on election campaigns was chaired by Sir Christopher

Chataway, who also recommended that the Speaker's connection with the boundary commissions should be severed for, I believe, good and sufficient reasons.

The point about consultation with the Speaker may not have been calculated to embarrass the Speaker, but there is an inherent and unattractive consequence of the failure to consult. In introducing the Bill at this time, without any serious consultation, the Government have put themselves in the position of appearing to be partisan. In such a matter in which, to quote the words of the Hansard Society report,

"Under the so-called 'First Past the Post' electoral system the drawing of constituency boundaries can have a very significant effect on party fortunes",

it should not be left to individual parties to proceed in this way. Nor is it sensible to do as the Government have done, which is to introduce a Bill which deals only with the question of timing and not with the other anomalies and difficulties faced by the boundary commissions.

The Boundary Commission for England produced a report last year in which it drew on its experience to draw attention to the problems that it saw. There was nothing in the Home Secretary's speech, nor is there any provision in the Bill, to tackle the problems that the Boundary Commission for England has identified. The two principal problems it highlighted are the problem of popular participation in the boundary commissions' work and the problem of conformity of decisions between different parts of the country.

On the latter point, we might have expected to hear how the Government viewed the 1983 Court of Appeal decision in the case referred to by the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham). In the case the Labour party sought judicial review of a number of decisions by the boundary commission and of the way in which it conducted its role. It did so because it believed that the boundary commission was giving undue weight to one of the rules in the existing legislation which required it to operate within county boundaries or, in the case of London, within borough boundaries which it would be extremely difficult to ignore.

I do not think that the law, as expressed in the Court of Appeal case and as consolidated in the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, is satisfactory. I remind the Minister what the Master of the Rolls, Lord Donaldson, said in that case.

"It is clear in our judgment . . . of these matters that although they may all be properly regarded as interlocking"—

that is, the five criteria set out in schedule 2 to the 1986 Act—

"the requirement in rule 4 that 'so far as is practicable' constituencies shall not cross county or London borough boundaries must be regarded as taking precedence over the requirement in rule 5 concerning the size of the electorate in each constituency".

In establishing the case for seeking a redrawing of boundaries, some attention should be paid to the priority to be given in law to the requirement to conform with what the hon. Member for St. Helens, South described as "the skin" of the county boundaries. I should have thought that the greater desideratum is to seek to give greater equality to the value of the vote, although I repeat that I do not believe that that will be achieved without an alteration in our electoral system which will introduce a system of fair voting.

The Bill is exceedingly important and it may create acute difficulties for the Boundary Commission in Scotland, and probably in England, because of the proposed reforms of local government and because of the provisions of clause 3, which draw attention to the fact that the boundary commission will have to pay attention to local authority boundaries at a time when they are not merely fluid, but wholly uncertain.

Indeed, the approach of the Secretary of State for Scotland has not been spelt out beyond an adherence to a very broad view that there should be single-tier authorities. I do not know whether he means that in the highlands and islands of Scotland we should have a single Highland region with no tiers below it, or whether we are to have some new authorities based on districts.

If we are to have a single-tier authority in the highlands covering approximately half the land mass of Scotland, the boundary commission will not be greatly assisted by reference to local government boundaries when deciding how to allocate populations to parliamentary constituencies in future. That is an example of the difficulties and uncertainties that face the boundary commissions which make it inappropriate to proceed as the Government suggest.

I accept what seems to be common ground between the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and the Home Secretary that the widening disparities in populations of constituencies should be tackled before the next election. However, it should not be tackled in the way suggested in the Bill. It should not have been tackled by the Government introducing a Bill on a matter of considerable constitutional importance without consultation, discussion or external advice and simply, apparently, to satisfy their own urgent desires to secure their position.

I cannot accept what the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said about the probability that the Bill will make no difference. That is part of the right hon. Gentleman's well-known optimism in respect of the fact that Labour will form the next Government whenever the election is held and whatever boundaries may be decided. That is a misconception. The Bill is partisan and the way in which it has been introduced is enough proof for citizens of objectivity who are concerned about such matters. I hope that the Government will take the Bill away, reconsider it, discuss it with other political parties and then bring back a better Bill.

6.31 pm

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Before considering the Bill specifically, I wish to refer to the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) and to echo some of the comments of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) about my hon. Friend's predecessor, Sir Anthony Meyer. I hope that I can do that with the full weight of my 83,000 constituents and not belittle the 31,000 constituents of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland who so eloquently placed on the record his views of Sir Anthony Meyer.

My new colleague the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West will, in his parliamentary career, miss the charm and friendliness expressed by Sir Anthony, particularly in the way in which he treated new Members of Parliament. As a new Member five years ago, I well remember the charm and help that Sir Anthony showed me. I wish to place that on record and the fact that he did wonderful work for his constituents and for the

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Franco-British group, of which he was chairman for many years, building up a relationship between this Parliament and the French Parliament.

Sir Anthony and I shared problems with sea defences. The pictures of flooding which were so graphically shown on television enabled many of us who had concerns about our sea defences to alert the Government, who have changed their thinking a great deal in respect of sea defences in the past few years. Sir Anthony Meyer was the key in that he concentrated people's minds on the issue.

Our new colleague, the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West was previously a broadcaster with the BBC. There will be great rejoicing in heaven that one of the sinners has repented. We can certainly do with a few poachers turned gamekeepers on the Conservative Benches. I welcome him and his excellent maiden speech, which I am sure is the first of many speeches that he will make in the House over the years.

Before coming to this place, many people are unsure about the animosity across the Chamber. They are uncertain whether it is real or feigned. As the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy had spent so long slaving away to achieve a position in which they would be able to table their own legislation, it was rumoured that the Government might be kind enough, in this new Parliament, to introduce a Bill more of less in their honour, embodying the kind of socialist principles that we knew they would want to stand for: equality, fairness, job creation, minimum wages and more public spending. When one considers the Bill, one has to admit that the Home Office has come up with the right Bill to encompass such wonderful legislation and thus put that fairness into practice.

We must therefore wonder why the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was so curmudgeonly in his greeting for the Bill. I wonder whether Labour will want to force a Division at the end of the debate. Conservative Members believed that the Labour party still stood for those socialist principles of years ago, but I am afraid that we got it completely wrong. The Labour party no longer stands for fairness, equality or job creation, although it perhaps still stands for minimum wages and more public spending.

I wonder whether that may be a slight reflection on the fact that there are shortly to be elections to the shadow Cabinet and for the Labour party leadership and deputy leadership. One of the candidates, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), has said that he believes that previous elections to the shadow Cabinet involved some gerrymandering and fiddling. The House must be grateful that he made that public and brought it to our attention, although one wonders why he did not blow the whistle when he did so well in those elections rather than leaving it till now. Perhaps he believes that the system is not going to work this time.

Conservative Members believe in fair elections. During the Whitsun recess I visited the Manchester industrial museum. I recommend that people should visit that museum. Yesterday I found in my pocket a piece of paper which I had obviously picked up in that excellent museum. That piece of paper recorded one of the most important things to happen in our political history. It carried the six points of the people's charter produced in 1838 by the Chartists, who were instrumental in pushing the modern Conservative party and eventually the Labour party into parties of mass movement.

The Chartists' fifth condition was well written and is as pertinent today as it was in 1838. It seeks:

"5 EQUAL CONSTITUENCIES, securing the same amount of representation for the same number of electors, instead of allowing small constituencies to swamp the votes of larger ones."

Mr. Robert B. Jones: In commending that principle, I hope that my hon. Friend will not go along with the other principles. I doubt whether many of us would be in favour of annual Parliaments, although we might be more sympathetic to the idea of having three acres and a cow.

Mr. Bruce: My hon. Friend assumes that I do not have political amnesia. As in all good political speeches, one refers only to those parts which help one's argument. One does not confuse the mind of the listener. I do not believe that we need annual Parliaments, about which the Chartists state:

"thus presenting the most effectual check to bribery and intimidation since though a constituency might be bought once in seven years (even with the ballot) no purse could buy a constituency under a system of universal suffrage in each ensuing twelvemonth: and since members, when elected for a year only, would not be able to defy and betray their constituencies as now."

I am not sure whether that holds for elections to the Labour shadow Cabinet.

Mr. Barnes: If the hon. Gentleman looks at his leaflet, he will see that the three acres and a cow have nothing to do with the six points of the charter that were associated with the ideas propounded by Feargus O'Connor, who was a Chartist leader. The six points of the charter, including annual elections, are all about arrangements for this House and for electoral arrangements. Five of the six are in place in one form or another.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before the hon. Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) continues, the relevance of his previous points is becoming increasingly obscure to me.

Mr. Bruce: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. As you can see, I am being led down a path that I was not trying to follow. I was about to make a point about my constituency of South Dorset. Before the Reform Act 1832, my constituency was represented by no fewer than 10 Members of Parliament. Many people realise that I often do the work of 10 men, but I wish that I were paid to do the job of 10 men. We in South Dorset believe in the fairness of the system. In giving up nine of our previous seats, we believed that we should ensure that equality of size of constituency is maintained.

We in South Dorset, along with people in other constituencies, hate the thought of change. I certainly hate the thought of having to lose 20,000 or so constituents who have been loyal and kind to me over the years. The boundary commission, which is to sit in Dorchester on Tuesday and Wednesday, will consider all the counter-claims and try to get the best balance so that there is symmetry between the areas which could be amalgamated to give rise to the eighth Dorset constituency recommended by the Parliamentary Boundary Commission.

The Bill is absolutely right. We must have the changes in place in plenty of time for an election in 1996 or 1997. At the beginning of 1995, people will be able to set up a

new association in Dorset, select a candidate and do all the necessary things, including much fundraising. That will have to happen in all the constituencies that are changed. I do not like to lose people, but we shall disfranchise people unless we make adjustments. If adjustments are to be made, it is best to make them quickly. That is what the Bill would do.

Many hon. Members have mentioned the strange idea that, within the United Kingdom Parliament, there should be the same general rules for selecting the size of constituencies but that those rules should be circumvented on a national basis for Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England, with a different number of people per constituency in each case.

Figures have already been provided by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), but the most striking figure is the difference between 54,000 per constituency in Scotland and more than 69,000 per constituency in England. In effect, four Scotsmen from an average-sized Scottish constituency moving to an average-sized English constituency would end up with only three votes. That is often turned the other way round, but why disfranchise Scotsmen or Welshmen who come to live in England? As I have a geographical affinity with both countries, perhaps I should have an extra third of a vote.

We should settle the matter now. One way of doing that would be to amalgamate the four boundary commissions into one and then divide the total population by 651—or even 650, to go back to the figure before the additional seat was recently created—and consider perhaps 65,000 constituents per seat.

The point has been made that we have to have special rules for very sparsely populated areas, and I fully agree, but those special rules could be applied on a United Kingdom basis. For places such as the Western Isles with 23,000 constituents, it would be easier to spread the additional number of constituents to be absorbed throughout the whole of the United Kingdom rather than just in Scotland. My namesake, the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) already has to look after 80,000 constituents in Scotland. If we are to look after constituents in the Western Isles and in the Caithnesses and Sunderlands of this world, taking account of sparse populations, the burden should be spread over the whole of the United Kingdom. With a United Kingdom Parliament, there is no need for an artificial barrier which separates out the different countries.

This is a good Bill as far as it goes, and the House should support it. I should be extremely surprised if the Labour party divided the House on the issue. The matter should be for the good sense, good judgment and honour of all Members of Parliament. We can rely on the boundary commission, as we have done previously, to do its job well, and this additional legislation will help it to do just that.

6.46 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): All English Members have received a newsletter from the Boundary Commission for England stating that the general review of boundaries is intended to be produced by mid-1995. Clause 2 states that that should be done by the end of 1994, merely bringing the measure six months forward. It then allows that, even if that is not done by that date, it is not statutory: no action can then be taken for failure to produce the review at that time.

It is a peculiar measure which tries to gee up the work of the boundary commission when that could be done by other techniques—for instance, clause 1 allows extra resources, and also the Government could merely encourage that activity. Why do we have that date, just six months earlier? It looks as though everything would be okay under the previous arrangements, and there would still be time to act. Perhaps the commission would have come forward with reports prior to mid-1995. That allows a suspicion to arise in people's minds about what is taking place.

One of the greatest defects in the measure is that the 1991 electoral register will determine the quotas and will decide what is to be done within a certain county in relation to the numbers to be divided up. Massive numbers of people are missing from the electoral register. Before 1987, the electoral register was not unproblematic—there were many errors in it. Many ineligible people were included and others who were eligible were not included. In a rough and ready way, it always balanced out the errors. A report by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in 1981 showed that there were sets of compensating errors of about 7 per cent. in the register. By the end of its life a typical register was already about 16 per cent. out. So there were problems.

But there were not great problems with boundary reviews. As there were sets of compensating errors and the total figures were more or less correct for individual areas, we did not have great problems in working out quotas and deciding how many parliamentary seats there should be in a shire seat.

However, the electoral register was hit from 1987 onwards, coinciding with the introduction of the poll tax. The problem occurred first in Scotland and then moved to England and Wales. There was no problem of a lack of numbers in Northern Ireland, the difference being that Northern Ireland never had a poll tax: it never had two sets of registers which interfered with each other and affected the registration of certain groups of people.

The shortfall between the numbers on the registers and the estimated population is not evenly distributed throughout the United Kingdom. If they were evenly distributed, the quotas might work and things might be reasonably okay in some rough and ready sense, but there is a serious maldistribution of the missing people.

We heard the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) this evening. The figures for Clwyd seem reasonable. They are probably as good as those for any other county area in England, Wales or Scotland, but in other areas the figures are serious. There are many shortages in the London area. Usually in large conurbations the numbers problem is considerable.

I referred in an intervention to a parliamentary answer which spelled out the problems. First, on 6 February, between columns 293 and 296 of *Hansard*, I was given the figures for Scotland. There is a shortfall of 140,000 between the estimated population and the number of people on the register. The figures are divided into district areas and parliamentary constituencies. Each of the parliamentary constituencies shows a shortfall between its electorate and the relevant population figure. In eight constituencies, the shortfall is 3,000 or more. In two constituencies, it is 4,000. In Strathkelvin and Bearsden,

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5,000 people are missing, and in Midlothian and Perth and Kinross, 4,000 people are missing. That is a serious factor which needs to be corrected.

Mr. McCartney: I was born and brought up in Strathkelvin, and my family stay there. It is one of the growth areas of west central Scotland. One cannot move for new housing. The area is developing from a former mining area into a commuter area for Glasgow. It is astonishing that the figures show a serious drop in the electorate when, in population terms, Strathkelvin is a growth area. It is one area of Scotland where, even now, growth is continuing, to the detriment of the green belt. One cannot travel from Glasgow all the way through to Cumbernauld and Strathkelvin because of the build-up of population and development in the area.

Mr. Barnes: I thank my hon. Friend. I must make the point clear. I am talking about the difference between the number of people on the electoral register and the number of people entitled to be on it. It is possible that the electorate in Strathkelvin has grown. Part of the hidden problem is that we often do not see the shortfall in electoral registration because we see the electorate growing in various areas. However, the population on the register might not grow by anything like as much as it should.

The problem in Strathkelvin might be exactly that new people are moving in and the arrangements do not allow registration to take place quickly enough to include the new people. Yet the people who move in are entitled to be on the electoral register in future and should be taken into account in determining the boundaries.

So we know where the problems are in Scotland, because the Scottish Office is kind enough to provide the statistics. For England and Wales, I received a written answer from the Department of Health. Even though the Home Office has responsibility for ensuring that electoral registration takes place, the Department of Health collects the figures. The answer in columns 473 to 480 of *Hansard* of 11 February shows that the shortfall for England is 1,750,000—a massive disparity. Areas such as Barnet, which is represented by four constituencies, show a shortfall of 34,000. Other shortfalls are: Brent 26,000; Camden 30,000; Ealing 43,000; Islington 29,000. Cities such as Manchester have a shortfall of 35,000. Birmingham has 31,000 missing, and Bradford has 33,000.

In some areas, such as Clwyd, there is not a great problem, but in other areas there is a serious problem and there will be a considerable maldistribution if we plough ahead with the current arrangements and those proposed in the Bill. To prevent that maldistribution, we could decide to act on the estimated relevant population figures rather than the figures for those who are on corrupt registers; or we could take emergency action to get the electoral registers right. If we got the electoral registration figures right, we could complete the exercise.

I accept the principle that we should have equal electoral districts. I grant that there are some extra problems in Scotland, but I support the general principle that electoral districts should be of equal size as far as possible. I want us to move towards that as soon as possible, but we must do it on the correct information. Otherwise, considerable injustices will be created within the electoral system.

The evidence that the electoral register is in such a bad way is produced by the OPCS. It published an article in issue 64 of "Population Trends" in summer 1991, which showed the disappearance of the electorate which, as I said, tied in with the introduction of the poll tax. Furthermore, the greatest percentage of people missing from the electoral register is among attainers—the people who are about to be placed on the register for the first time. Presumably it began to be understood that it was less easy to discover such people if they did not appear on the electoral register, and therefore the poll tax register. They could not be found on any previous register.

There is no problem with the percentage of attainers on the register in Northern Ireland. Registration of attainers is probably healthier than ever in Northern Ireland. Perhaps the political parties in Northern Ireland do a great deal to encourage electoral registration. Unfortunately, such encouragement has fallen by the wayside in England, Scotland and Wales.

At one time, when the Labour party was emerging, people were engaged to a considerable extent in encouraging registration. They believed that their way forward was to ensure that electoral registration took place. Seats would surely flow from ensuring that all the voters in an area were registered. We need to put the electoral register right.

The Home Office is currently involved in discussions that could lead to a solution. According to a parliamentary answer that I was given, the circumstances surrounding the general election are being investigated, including the state of the electoral register. Representations have been made by political parties and other interests, and by about October a report may have emerged. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys is also conducting an investigation, and we shall gain some valuable information as a result.

The Bill should be put on hold until we have secured the information that will allow us to establish equal electoral districts very rapidly. We cannot do that, however, on the basis of a large quantity of information that is invalid and incorrect, and electoral registers that were corrupt at the time of the election. Owing to the poll tax factor, about 1·5 million people were missing from the registers. If we assume that that figure represents an anti-Tory cohort, we can also assume that, if the names had not been missing, there would have been a hung Parliament.

Mr. Tony Banks: I take my hon. Friend's point about the inaccuracy of the registers: we feel strongly about that in London. I challenge him on another point, however. I may have misunderstood him, but he seemed to say that the people who are missing from the registers had failed to register because of the poll tax. That applies to a certain percentage of the population, but in my borough, for instance, more names appeared on the poll tax register than on the electoral register.

Mr. Barnes: Under the poll tax legislation, it was possible to transfer people from the poll tax register to the electoral register. During the legislation's Committee stage, the Opposition moved that that should be obligatory—that people should be transferred automatically, thus adding to the number on the electoral register. As it was not obligatory, transferral was happening in some areas and not in others. A number of lists and

provisions are used for poll tax registration purposes; it might be much more legitimate to use them for electoral registration purposes.

Mr. McCartney: Is there not a case for a completely new electoral census? The Bill does not contain a clause that would provide local authorities with the resources to maintain and develop the register, or a clause to ensure that, wherever an electoral registration officer operates, he is equipped with a clear set of guidelines to enable him to carry out his duties appropriately. My area has a good electoral registration system, but in many areas electoral registration is not given the necessary priority. It is therefore impossible for the boundary commission to deal with information that is up to date and factually correct, and many seats may be lost because of the poor condition of the register. That has nothing to do with the poll tax; it is due to the system, and the lack of resources with which to maintain it.

Mr. Barnes: I agree that the poll tax is not the only problem. There are many long-term problems. The current extent of mobility in society is causing increasing difficulties, and hosts of people feel that they are no longer part of that society. Action must be taken to encourage them to register and exercise their rights. Much needs to be done to ensure that we have proper, equal electoral districts.

I hope that the Home Office will move in that direction. I have therefore introduced a private Member's Bill, which will be dealt with on 12 February. The Bill seeks the establishment of a rolling register, allowing additions and deductions to be made to keep the register up to date. It confers extra powers and duties on electoral registration officers, which I hope will lead to the provision of the money that they need. It also encourages the mounting of advertising campaigns to persuade people to register.

Let us consider the amount that the Government spend on advertising privatisations, fancy employment schemes such as youth training and the like. There is a vast disparity between that amount and the amount that they spend on electoral registration. In one year, under the previous Conservative Government, expenditure on national publicity for electoral registration amounted to about 0·32 per cent. of total expenditure. It fell far short of the amount being spent overseas to encourage expatriate voters to register.

A massive educational job needs to be done to encourage registration. When the necessary facilities have been provided, we shall be in a much better position to bring about equal electoral districts. We may be able to move forward on two fronts at once, especially if the Government give signs of willingness to think along the lines that I have suggested.

There is a further problem, however. Clause 3 provides a link between the local government and parliamentary boundary reviews. It gives the data by which action will be taken if the local government reviews have been completed; it may be necessary for the parliamentary boundary commission to take the knock-on consequences into account. According to the guidance notes on local government boundaries, produced by the Department of the Environment, the parliamentary boundary commission is one of the bodies that must be consulted. Information must be carried between the two bodies.

What worries me is the fact that some of the first tranche of shire authorities that are to be considered for local government boundary review are not included in the tranches that have so far been considered for parliamentary boundary review. They will be considered at the end of the procedure, and in the case of those at the back of the queue for parliamentary review, account will have to be taken of the local government boundary reviews that may have been agreed earlier. That will lead to the danger of a political stitch-up. The two systems should be separated.

We are moving forward in terms of local government reform. Dates have been named by which we must accept the boundaries. Some people will be stuck with the boundaries as they are now, while others will be involved in changing circumstances. The two elements do not fit together, and they are wide open to abuse—not abuse by manipulative local government or parliamentary boundary commissioners, but abuse by those who are laying down the parameters within which they should act. The game is being fixed by the Government.

We must watch the Bill very closely. It is not the innocuous measure that the Secretary of State initially presented; it is a measure of great significance for the future of political democracy. Unless satisfactory answers can be given to the questions that I have raised—I do not believe that they can—we should vote against it.

7.8 pm

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): I listened with some interest to the speech of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). He had it right when he said that the consequences of a boundary commission review are not always easy to predict either for politicians or the boundary commission.

I have good reason to be grateful to the parliamentary boundary commission, as my predecessor in West Hertfordshire, or Hemel Hempstead as it was then called, now my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Sir N. Lyell), decided to go to another constituency, leaving West Hertfordshire vacant and therefore enabling me to enter the House. Certainly my experience has been that it is a nice constituency to represent, with a good solid Conservative majority.

The work of the boundary commission is not easy. In tackling the problems of where to draw constituency boundaries, it has real difficulties of geographical spread. In addition, it must reach decisions on areas where the entitlement is not for eight or nine seats—some whole number—but for some number in between. I am fortunate to have rather more electors than there are supposed to be in a parliamentary constituency. Nevertheless, all of us approach a boundary review with some trepidation because we do not know what will happen in our area, whether our constituency will change its political nature or whether we shall end up with vast tracts of new constituents to get to know and lose those whom we already know. Our trepidation could be tempered a little if we could nominate those constituents whom we are to lose under a redistribution, but I doubt whether the boundary commission would ever go down that road.

Remarks have been made on both sides of the Chamber about alleged under-representation. Certainly there is evidence that some people who should be on the register are not. That has a great deal to do with the procedures adopted by different local authorities. Far too many of

[Mr. Robert B. Jones]

them send out their electoral registration documents at the end of August or the beginning of September for registration in mid-October. Obviously, many people move over that six-week period. I know of constituents who were disfranchised because the registration documents were either put in the bin by the previous residents who knew that they were moving or forwarded to the previous residents. That is a great pity, but there is a way round it. One can submit claims to the electoral registration officer virtually up to the last minute.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) referred to the historic role of political parties in that regard. The Conservative Association was founded to check the electoral register. Many of our voluntary workers as well as our professional agents forget that that is a key part of their role. I hope that political parties and the Government will encourage more registration campaigns.

Mr. Rooker: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point, but it must be remembered that at one time the political parties were responsible for constructing the electoral register, not just checking it. The sheer corrupt practices brought about independent electoral registration officers as an institution of local government. An independent, arm's-length, well-financed system of registration should be established and the parties should keep their mucky fingers out of it. Such a system would guarantee that everybody is on the register.

Mr. Jones: I would not quarrel with the gist of that. Nevertheless, there is a role for political parties to do what is necessary in a democratic society and ensure that people get the vote. A lesson to be drawn from this evening's debate and the consensus across the Chamber is that we need reforms that go beyond the scope of the Bill. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) referred to postal votes and I shall come to that because the present arrangements are lacking. If the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) is suggesting that the electoral register should be entirely in the hands of the professionals under the electoral registration officer, I do not agree, because the parties should play a role in a democratic society.

Mr. Tony Banks: Our point is that the Government have not introduced such proposals. They are not talking about additional resources for local authorities or the establishment of some form of independent assessment, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr suggested. We would not allow people to treat the Inland Revenue in this way. People cannot disappear out of the tax system. At least, if they try, they are pursued night and day. That does not happen with electoral registration, yet it underpins our democracy.

Mr. Jones: You would not want me to be tempted to discuss Inland Revenue records, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not believe that resources are the only answer to the electoral registration problem. The procedures need to be tightened up. Far too often local authorities leave people on the register if the form is not returned. Sometimes—this has happened in my constituency—people are registered against houses that have been demolished. There is also double registration. The does not necessarily affect numbers, as the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East suggested.

I disagree with the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that, if it had not been for under-registration, we would have had a hung Parliament. His argument is not sustainable, considering the swings in different constituencies, whether the electoral register had decreased or remained the same. Does he remember the comments about how the enormous drop in the north Hackney register would put the Labour party under pressure? I did not notice any evidence of that when the result was declared.

Mr. Barnes: I did include a proviso in my comments. I said that if the 1·5 million missing were an anti-Tory cohort—I accepted that others would be involved in that number and there were good grounds for saying that many who were squeezed off the register were against the Government—it could well have produced a hung Parliament. Twenty-two Conservative Members were elected with majorities of 1,000 or below. I am not saying that all 22 would have lost; some might have survived, but some with majorities just over 1,000 might have lost. If the results in about 22 seats had been different, we would have had a hung Parliament.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman replies, I remind Members that interventions by their nature should be brief and relevant. The debate seeems to be going wide of the Bill. That is a gentle reminder.

Mr. Jones: Perhaps, then, I shall move on to another topic and explain why estimates of population are no better than the electoral register. In the past, many such figures have not been reliable for any purpose. If we were to face a redistribution and reallocation of constituencies on the basis of the estimated population figures, we would have many more difficulties than we have with the electoral register under the present arrangement.

The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) referred to the difficulties of building blocks for the redistribution of seats. He rightly pointed out that there were problems because London borough boundaries were not crossed last time. However, the precedent has been set at least in some parts of metropolitan districts. I would expect the parliamentary boundary commission to do that in London this time and I hope that that would lead to a reduction in the over-representation of London, which undoubtedly is unfair in terms of one man, one vote.

One must start from some basis, and the present county boundaries are a good starting point. Otherwise, the boundary commission would have the unenviable task of starting at one end of the country and somehow creating constituencies of 69,000 running down. Then it would have to cross rivers and other major natural or community boundaries. Although there are anomalies within county boundaries, at least by staying within them the commission has some outline within which to work. That is practicable.

I suspect that the commission will group London boroughs, as it did metropolitan districts, and consider two or three together. That will produce some sensible and coherent proposals.

Mr. William O'Brien: I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman said about constituencies crossing the

boundaries of different authorities. My constituency does just that. It has four wards in Wakefield and one in Leeds. Under the Bill, there will be insufficient time to bring the communities, which have separate identities, together. If a constituency is to cross boundaries, it is important that sufficient time is given so that those in the communities understand exactly where they will have to vote. Anything less than that would be unfair to the people involved.

Mr. Jones: I do not see any difficulty in people understanding where to vote. People will vote in the wards, where they have always voted. There is no question of constituencies crossing ward boundaries and, because those wards contain entire polling districts, the problem does not arise.

Labour Members who have spoken in the debate primarily represent metropolitan constituencies, but many Conservative Members represent non-metropolitan ones. In those cases, it is not unusual for the parliamentary constituency to consist of areas from more than one local authority. I do not pretend that that is easy. I represent two thirds of one local authority but many Hertfordshire Members represent bits of different authorities. That means that we have to attend to different functions in different districts. That is, of course, a problem, but it is not insurmountable.

The position in the United Kingdom is, at least, better than that in the United States. The exact mathematical rules used to make up congressional districts lead to the most ludicrous and unnatural boundaries as well as the temptation to gerrymander them because the boundary decisions are in the hands of elected representatives rather than an independent body, such as the boundary commission. However, there is one lesson we can learn from the United States. It managed to produce a census in December 1990, on which the distribution of congressional districts is based, and have those districts in place in time to pick candidates for the election in November this year.

It is important that the boundary commission's work should be able to produce constituencies in good time so that candidates can be selected and organisations capable of fighting elections can be formed.. That would also mean that those Members of Parliament who are unfortunately dispossessed, because of the reductions in the number of seats in one area or another, would have time to decide whether their future lies outside the House or perhaps in a constituency in another part of the country.

I praise the boundary commission because it has shared much of its thinking and information on the current review with the public. I remember reading its two previous reviews and the only information we received was a list of wards that would make up the proposed new constituencies. The current press releases contain a great deal of the boundary commission's reasoning and that is to be applauded because it will help people to put forward alternative views. The publication of the electorates in various wards will also help, because people will be able to ensure that their alternative views are consistent with the legal obligations of the 1991 registers. The boundary commission is doing more than it did before.

I hope that the boundary commission will think more about the geography of the constituencies that it creates. The numbers game is not everything. I have difficulties because the two halves of my constituency are only just connected by a road while the two halves of the constituency of my neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) are not connected by road. That creates difficulties which would not have arisen had rational proposals been made in the first place so that we had geographically compact constituencies. It is true that the different parts of the constituencies connect with each other, but across fields only, so we have to ride or walk from one part to another as we cannot go by road. That should answer any question that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr may ask.

Like almost everyone else, I understand the position of hon. Members representing the Scottish isles or constituencies such as Caithness and Sutherland— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member, but an undercurrent of conversation from Labour Members is interfering with my ability to hear him.

Mr. Jones: My first elected position was as a burgh councillor in Scotland, so I am familiar with the geographical problems involved. However, because we pay special attention to the problems of the Western Isles or Anglesey, or other parts of north Wales, that does not mean that we should have the same attitude to the urban parts of Scotland.

The case that the allocation of Glasgow constituencies should be based on exactly the same principle as those of Birmingham is more or less unanswerable. If we ignore the constituency of Sutton Coldfield, which is above the quota, Birmingham has 11 Members of Parliament and 656,000 electors. Glasgow has exactly the same number of Members of Parliament, but it has only 518,000 electors. On any calculation, Glasgow has two seats more than it should have compared with Birmingham. That might be exacerbated by the review, because Birmingham and Glasgow might have fewer representatives and it is easy to imagine that the differential will widen rather than narrow. That is not justifiable.

We should apply the principle of equality throughout the United Kingdom except in remote rural areas, where that is not practicable. The boundary commission already has powers to consider such factors in England. That is why we have a smaller electorate in rural English constituencies, such as Hexham, than in urban ones. I do not see why that approach should not apply throughout the United Kingdom and not just within England.

Reference was made to postal votes. I fully understand why there must be a closing date for postal votes well in advance of the election. Ballot papers must be printed and sent out and time allowed in which to return them. I do not see any reason why electors should not be able to go to the town hall or write in to appoint a proxy even up to the last minute before polling. It is simply a matter of issuing a new proxy poll card and notifying the presiding officers at a polling station that a proxy has been appointed. It should be possible to do that up to 48 hours, or even 24 hours, before polling. That would solve the problem for the many people who discover, at the last minute, that they are going away on business or on holiday.

I know that anyone can apply for a permanent proxy if they have good reason to think that they will travel as part of their occupation and that they might be disfranchised.

[Mr. Jones]

As practical politicians, we know that that is not what happens. Only those who travel regularly and are politically aware apply for permanent proxies.

Many advantages would be gained from changing the system. The claims procedures should also be simplified and extended to cover overseas electors. Why on earth can overseas electors not put in a claim if they are legitimately entitled to be on the register up to the same moment as any other elector? There is no logic in that practice, and it disfranchises people. The registration procedures are still too complicated. One needs a second-level degree to be able to understand the form.

This debate has been interesting to those of us who, perhaps, take a closer interest in the nuts and bolts of electoral workings than is usual in the House. We are not always preoccupied with the grand world events or even the major domestic political issues. We must consider the nuts and bolts that make our democracy work.

I believe profoundly in the constituency system. We have a duty to represent our electorate and we need to have an affinity with them. That is why it is important that the constituency boundaries are changed regularly. That means that the system should be more streamlined, which is why I support the Bill. However, that has not solved all our problems.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take on board the points that have been raised on both sides of the House, because all electoral arrangements need to be dealt with from time to time. I hope that we shall look again at some of them in the not-too-distant future.

7.29 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): In introducing the Bill, the Home Secretary emphasised its narrow effect and said that it was primarily concerned with the timing of boundary commission reports. However, the Government want the timing changed and the publications of the reports brought forward, because they believe press reports which have suggested that there is a significant party advantage in so doing. That was made clear in the press comments after the general election and is also seen in the timing of the legislation.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) referred to other matters which could have been included in the Bill. He wanted it to include poll cards and postal votes, and the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) made the useful suggestion that statutory rules on registration could have been embodied in the Bill to avoid some of the anomalies which occur. Northern Ireland Members are particularly conscious of anomalies in the registration system.

All those matters could have been included. Indeed, I believe that the Home Office is carrying out its normal post-election review of procedures and is even to convene a meeting of political representatives in the next few months to discuss those matters. If there is agreement between the parties on the details of registration, and so on, those could be embodied in the legislation. Although the Bill is the Home Office's one shot at electoral legislation in this Parliament, those other matters are all being left out. That makes the inter-party consultation which is about to take place a bit of a farce.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Some of the changes which might come about could be made through guidance to electoral registration officers or by order, but any large change which would affect the review of boundaries must be left until after the current review is complete.

Mr. Trimble: I appreciate that some of the matters that I have mentioned could be handled by guidance and subordinate legislation, but I am surprised that the Government were not even prepared to wait another month to see what happens in their post-election review of electoral legislation before introducing the Bill. That reinforces my view that the legislation is dominated by considerations of party advantage.

Mr. Lloyd: I hope that I can help the hon. Gentleman by explaining that changes to how the boundary commission will see its role and judge what boundaries it should propose in its recommendations cannot be made now without going back to scratch, because the English boundary commission has been operating since the beginning of last year and has already made provisional recommendations for about one third of the counties. It is simply not possible to return to the start. However, matters which several hon. Members have raised about postal votes can be dealt with——

Mr. Trimble: I was not suggesting——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) that no one must stand between the person in the Chair and the Member speaking.

Mr. Trimble: I hope that the Minister did not misunderstand me. I was suggesting not that the boundary revision process should go back to scratch but that it was theoretically possible to include other matters in the Bill rather than focusing on such narrow issues.

The advantage in considering other issues would be to deal with anomalies in the present legislation. An anomaly revealed in the 1983 litigation was the fact that local government boundaries have priority over quota issues. Most people would regard that as an anomaly. Looking at those rules, I notice that local government boundaries to which the commission must have regard in England, Wales and Scotland, are county and borough boundaries, whereas in Northern Ireland they are ward boundaries. That is an entirely different level, so there is some anomaly there.

Several Conservative Members focused primarily on what they regard as the anomalous over-representation of Wales and Scotland. Northern Ireland Members are particularly conscious of numbers of seats and agree that we are under-represented. The background to that is of some interest. The representation of the area which now constitutes Northern Ireland was increased in 1918 to some 30 seats. After the creation of a Northern Ireland Parliament in 1921, our representation was reduced to 13 and then, with the abolition of the university seat, it fell to 12 seats. That was quite a drop.

The reduction was a response to what is now known as the West Lothian question. That is worth thinking about, because in recent devolution debates hon. Members have suggested that, in the event of a future assembly in Wales or Scotland, some restriction should be placed on the ability of Welsh or Scottish Members here to discuss and vote on English matters.

I refer to the Northern Ireland experience because the question of reducing the speaking and voting rights of Members with regard to subject matter was considered and rejected. Instead, the different path of reducing the number of representatives, without affecting the powers and status of those representatives, was adopted. That path was adopted for the Northern Ireland Parliament and a Parliament was established, which was regarded at the time as "sovereign" within the areas devolved to it. Those two terms may seem slightly contradictory, but that was the opinion of the Law Officers of the Crown given in 1922. Parallel to that was the convention that matters within Stormont's competence could not be raised by way of question or otherwise in this place.

Lesser forms of devolution also exist—for example, the assembly proposed for Wales in the 1970s. In those issues, the West Lothian question does not really arise. As a belated response to the abolition of Stormont in 1973, Northern Ireland's representation in this House was increased to 17 in 1983. It was suggested that Northern Ireland was being treated as analogous to Wales in terms of representation, but the figure of 17 was close to the figure which would have obtained had a United Kingdom quota existed. In other words, if the electorate had been divided by 650 to provide a United Kingdom quota, it would have produced a figure close to 17.

Curiously, if a similar operation were undertaken now, a similar result would come about. The United Kingdom electorate is 43·7 million. If divided by 651, it produces a United Kingdom quota—if one were to exist—of just over 67,000. The present Northern Ireland quota, according to 1992 figures, is 67,000, so that similarity exists.

However, there is no such thing as a United Kingdom quota. We have separate Welsh, Scottish, English and Northern Ireland quotas and hon. Members have queried the differences. In commenting on those differences, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East referred to the answer given by the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas Hamilton). The Under-Secretary of State's response was interesting because, when questioned about Scotland's representation, he said:

> "The present settlement takes account of Scotland's status as a small nation and of large, sparsely populated and inaccessible areas."—[*Official Report*, 20 May 1992; Vol. 208, c. 250.]

He referred to three matters, of which the last two would generally be recognised as reasonable factors to take into account.

The rules in schedule 2 of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 govern the boundary commission, and rule 6 expressly refers to "special geographical considerations". The rules do not refer to what might be called the national factor but, implicitly and in a roundabout way which prevents open discussion of the matter, they do so through the device of setting minimum numbers of seats for Wales and for Scotland and leaving the English representation as the residual figure. That, again, detracts from the overall Great Britain figure. Indirectly, and in a typically English way, this takes account of the small nation factor. I describe it in that way because what is being done is not made explicit. That typifies much of the way in which the Government's administration is carried out.

I see nothing wrong in principle with taking account of the small nation factor. It is not an unusual factor. The United Kingdom is a multinational state, not a single, homogeneous nation state. In other multinational federations, it is not unusual to see some weighting to take account of small national units. I take the European Parliament and the way that voting takes place there as an example. In drawing this parallel, I am not expressing approval of the European union, as my vote and that of my party colleagues on the treaty of European union and on the Bill to provide that union will show when the matter comes before the House again.

In the European Parliament, countries have basic minimum figures—for example, Luxembourg is guaranteed six Members. Judging by equality of representation, that is good. I hope that it will not happen, but if any degree of European union proceeds, at some point people will begin to readdress the issue of equality of representation within the union and the degree of favour given to small national units. I think that the view will still be that there must be some increased representation for small national units which are in danger of being swamped by larger national units within a federation or multinational state.

That is the position within the United Kingdom, which is a multinational state with one nation—the English nation—numerically dominant. If one uses a purely mathematical approach throughout the kingdom, one opens the door to increasing that dominance. In view of the tendency of English Members of Parliament to ignore and then override the interests of the smaller national states, there is a case for increased representation for small national units in the way suggested by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West.

However, having agreed that there should be increased representation for smaller national units, one is then concerned, as a Northern Ireland Member, about the failure to apply that principle to Northern Ireland. In Wales and Scotland, minimum figures are given, but rule 1(4) relating to Northern Ireland is drafted differently. It does not give a minimum, and it could be construed as meaning that there shall always be 17 Members for Northern Ireland unless, having regard to factors such as boundaries, the commission cannot easily achieve that, in which case there can be one more or less.

That applies a mythical United Kingdom quota rather than adopting the approach used for Wales and Scotland, and we are concerned about that. When the changes were introduced in the late 1970s and early 1980s, we were given to understand that the Northern Ireland representation was to be increased to 17 to begin with, and would be increased as the population expanded. In 1983, Northern Ireland had an electorate of 1,061,000, giving a constituency quota of 62,000. In the intervening years, the electorate increased by 80,000 to 1,141,000, which on a 17-seat basis would give a quota of 67,000 but on an 18-seat basis would give a quota of 63,500. That would be consistent with the expectation that the figure would increase from 17 to 18 as the population increased.

Keeping the number of Northern Ireland Members of Parliament to 17 may suit those English Members who today queried Scottish and Welsh representation in the name of equality, but that commitment to equality strikes me as slightly dubious in view of the Government's failure to treat the United Kingdom as a single unit in the past. Perhaps English Members have been converted to the concept of equality of citizenship and equal citizenship. If they have, I looked forward to seeing them all come along

[Mr. Trimble]

on Thursday night to oppose the continuation of direct rule, which most clearly shows an inequality of citizenship. We shall see what happens.

What I have said shows that I feel that we have missed an opportunity to look again at the basis on which representation is adopted. We cannot take a crude mathematical quota and apply it, because that ignores the national element.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the hon. Gentleman feel that the small nation principle would be satisfied in the case of Northern Ireland if the number of constituents there increased from 17 to 18, or is he looking for something different?

Mr. McCartney: He is looking for 30.

Mr. Trimble: I did say that there were 30 Northern Ireland Members in 1918, but I could not justify that many today because the population figures have not grown. Under the existing legislation, it would be possible only to increase the Northern Ireland representation from 17 to 18. That would be in line with our expectations.

In reply to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, I should make it clear that my argument is slightly different. I am suggesting that if we take account of this factor we should do so explicitly, because the indirect way of doing so—through the phrasing of rules 2, 1(2) and 1(3) and schedule 2—gives rise to false expectations. Hon. Members representing Wales and Scotland may feel particularly defensive about this, but if one takes account of this factor explicitly, everybody knows what has been done. It can be debated and the extent to which it is done can be considered and allowed for, and nobody need feel defensive. The Bill does not take advantage of the opportunity to consider these matters. There is a need for a rethink about the basis on which representation takes place and the extent to which one takes into account the element of nationality.

There is a need for agreed principles, embodied in legislation, to cover representation to this place. Those principles should apply throughout the United Kingdom and would take account, as the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West said, not only of geography and sparsity of population, but of the position of the smaller units of the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom is not, as some people think, a single homogeneous unit but has its different parts, and it is right that, to some extent, those differences should be reflected here.

7.48 pm

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): It is appropriate that I should make my maiden speech on this Bill, for my constituency is suffering from a local government boundary reorganisation, the issues relating to which are relevant to those affecting this Bill. I am therefore grateful to have been called.

I pay tribute to Sir Hal Miller, my predecessor, who represented Bromsgrove and Redditch, and then Bromsgrove, from 1974. Although he was a vice-chairman of the Conservative party from 1984, he is principally remembered in this House for his involvement in, and support for, the car industry. He was joint chairman of the all-party motor industry group, but that office was only a token acknowledgement of the enormous work that he undertook, with others, to secure the future of the British motor industry at a time when it was under such threat that it might have disappeared altogether. The House and the country owe him a debt of gratitude for that work.

If Sir Hal was held in high esteem here, that is but little in comparison with the affection that he enjoyed in the constituency, where he assiduously looked after constituents' interests. Nothing was too trivial for his consideration, and there are many who remember with gratitude his work on their behalf—a difficult act to follow.

In his maiden speech to this House in March 1974, Hal Miller referred to the proposed construction of the western orbital route on the edge of the west midlands conurbation. It would not surprise hon. Members to hear that blight and the fear of development remain potent forces, because the western orbital route has still to be built. I wonder what will have happened in another 18 years; I can only hope that we will have ceased talking about it and planning it, and that it will have disappeared as a proposal.

Sir Hal's interest in the motor industry was germane to the interests of the constituency, containing as it does the corner of the Rover Longbridge car plant. Many of the constituents work in west midlands industry, so much of which is related to vehicle production.

Bromsgrove is a microcosm of middle England. We have a market town with some industry and a large service sector. We have villages and small towns and even the edge of the west midlands conurbation, including an overspill estate. That richness and variety give the place a special quality.

There is no single community, but a group of communities bound together by outside pressures, enjoying a good quality of life but always under threat from larger neighbours. Development pressure in this beautiful part of the countryside always has to be resisted. The green belt is seen more as a green lifeline.

As far as one can generalise, the people are of sound judgment, as demonstrated by my appearance here. They are also honest in paying their taxes—they have one of the best records of paying the community charge in the country. Below this House is a tally stick, displayed in a glass case, which was used 400 years ago by a resident of the area for the payment of his taxes—so the tradition is a long one.

The group of linked communities which makes up the constituency is under threat, for the old local government boundary is likely to be changed. The Local Government Boundary Commission proposes to move the urban fringe into the west midlands conurbation. It looks neat on the map; it would make good sense were it not for the fact that hardly anyone living in the area wants to be sucked into socialist Birmingham. That ability to overlook the wishes of the people must not be repeated by the parliamentary boundary commission.

Edmund Burke, writing 200 years ago, said:

"To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle of public affection."

He saw loyalty being built from the bottom up: the family, the community, the state. How can there be loyalty to the nation unless there is also identity with its parts? Those who seek to deride the importance of family and

community also attack the nation. That way lies anarchy, since people are important individually, as part of the family and as part of a nation.

We support each other through the units of which we are component parts. It follows that respect for community is as important as respect for nation or family, for each layer protects and enhances the other.

I take issue with the definition of nation offered earlier by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). He talked of the United Kingdom having several nations, but when I speak of "nation" I speak of one United Kingdom.

This House rightly guards its traditions. The last time anyone of my name sat here was 500 years ago. No doubt, by the time I have finished speaking, some hon. Members will hope that history will repeat itself. If he were here today, that representative would recognise many of our proceedings. We are all the products of our own history. What is true of individuals is true of our institutions; and communities have their traditions too. We should not ignore them; they are an important part of our history, as they have grown and developed.

The Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 requires the commission to take note of local ties. I hope that will be fully acknowledged in the forthcoming review. Of course boundaries must be changed to meet the required numbers, to ensure that each voter has as much democratic say as the next, but within that requirement we must allow the wishes of people to be ignored when creating new constituencies. I differ from some Opposition Members who seem to think that some principle of weighted voting can be achieved, particularly for Scotland and Wales. I find it surprising that they should advocate a different form of democracy for those parts of the country. I know that I should not be controversial in this speech, but I must add that Opposition Members are perhaps more used to systems of weighted voting in the form of trade union block votes.

The process of reorganising the constituencies is as important as reorganising local government. For too long we have allowed confusion to reign, councils to be too large and remote, communities to be forced together with little mutual interest. Unlike some Opposition Members, I welcome clause 3; by virtue of the clause, the commission will be able to take into account the initial views expressed by the new Local Government Commission, which is specifically charged with looking at the interests of the communities which are so important in the parliamentary scene.

Whatever changes are imposed as a result of this Bill, or in local government, the importance of the small platoon in society must be acknowledged. Again, I must not be controversial, but the party that I represent has rightly taken pride in the importance of the individual, the family, the community and the nation. Opposition Members often see the nation as foremost—at least, the nation as they would define society. The great divide between the two principal parties rests on our differing emphasis on whether the individual is to support society or society is to support the individual.

We must not lose sight of that great principle—the importance of the individual—when the commission scrutinises parliamentary boundaries. Great weight must be placed on individuals and their community within the requirement for equality of votes.

I support the Bill because it improves the efficiency of democracy. I wish that we were going further with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, but that is not possible today. When processing the change arising from this Bill we must not lose respect for our democratic traditions by cheapening the new constituencies, divorcing them from or splitting up their natural communities. Some change will be essential: change is always painful.

Let us maintain our emphasis on individuals, their loyalties, their ties and their identities when making changes within a requirement for numerical equality.

7.58 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I believe that this is the first time in eight years in the House that I have ever followed a maiden speaker. It was a privilege to listen to the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) and to hear his tribute to Hal Miller. Hal arrived in the House at the same time as I did, in February 1974. We all wish him well in his position as chief executive of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, helping there to redress the terrible imbalance in our motor industry.

The hon. Gentleman has a good record of defending independent local government. It was a pleasure to hear him speak about community and society, because we are all imbued with the notion that there is no such thing as society; we remember being lectured on that by the former Prime Minister. The hon. Gentleman will not again be allowed to speak pejoratively about socialist Birmingham without an intervention. From now on I shall describe him as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Bromsgrove.

The Bill is welcome, and anyone who professes to be a democrat, whatever his argument, party affiliation or views on the current electoral system, will agree that there must be equality of voting. Under our present electoral system, the only way in which one can remotely approach equality is to have equal numbers of electors in each constituency. I shall not bore the House by repeating statistics showing the wide disparities: I shall say only that the averages are not as bad as they appear.

In England, the average Labour Member represents 64,150 constituents and the average Conservative Member represents 71,600. Those are random figures. My constituency is the largest in Birmingham, with 72,817 constituents. The average Liberal Member in England represents 68,260 constituents. The figures we have heard in the debate show how misleading averages can be, because there are massive disparities, from 20,000 to more than 100,000. That cannot be tolerated, and it must be corrected as soon as possible. Movement of population will not affect the situation.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), who made an extremely valuable speech. I shall not repeat what he said about how the electoral register is compiled. About two or three years ago, I and my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) took part in a debate on electoral registration, the first in the House for donkey's years, at about 2 am one July. Electoral registration officers are extremely grateful that the House has in recent years started to take an interest in this backwater of local government, which is under-resourced because it is not particularly sexy.

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

The figures on the electoral register are for 1991, and we are debating not just movement of population but population growth. In 1991, the English shire counties had 2·7 million voters more than in 1976. Greater London had one third of a million less than in 1976, while in the metropolitan counties there was hardly any change. The figure is about 10,000 in 8 million. That means that the English electorate has grown by 2·4 million and the increase has all been in the English shire counties, which are under-represented by 19 or 20 Members. One could argue the converse, that the urban areas—Greater London and the districts within the metropolitan counties—are over-represented.

In Birmingham, it is said that the inner-city wards should have fewer constituents because the work load is greater. Members representing those wards and the inner-city constituencies should have greater resources to do the job, but equality of voting should be paramount. That is no excuse for different sized electorates. Our allowances—perhaps even our salaries, but I make no special point about that—should equate to the number of constituents. That would be seen to be fair.

The building blocks used for constituency changes—the local authority wards—are larger in the city I represent than in any other area. The smallest electorate in a Birmingham ward is 16,500, while the greatest is 21,500. The average Birmingham ward has 19,000 electors for three councils. I have four wards with almost 73,000 electors, and there are 12 councillors in my constituency. In terms of electorate and population, my constituency approximates to a city the size of Gloucester.

Some time ago, I checked to see how many councillors were involved in administration in Gloucester and was told that there were 33. In addition I was told that there were 12 county councillors as well as the 33 district councillors. Some urban areas are greatly under-represented, because the wards are far too big. When the boundary commission uses those wards as building blocks, the difference in a city such as Birmingham between a three-ward and a four-ward constituency will be 19,000 electors. There will be massive disparities between them and adjoining constituencies.

There are only three constituencies in Birmingham with four wards: mine, and those of Selly Oak and Northfield. All the others have three wards. The constituencies of my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and my hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath (Mr. Godsiff) which adjoins mine, and the constituencies of my surrounding hon. Friends, have 52,000 to 55,000 electors, while the largest constituencies have well over 70,000. That is an enormous disparity, and it cannot be corrected by the use of local authority building blocks. That will not change the review.

When Birmingham loses an hon. Member, as it will when the constituencies are reduced from 12 to 11—or from 11 to 10, if Sutton Coldfield is removed—more four-ward seats will be created, because its wards will be added to the other three constituencies. That will cause a disparity of 19,000 voters in adjoining constituencies. That would not be tolerated in other areas, and it happens only because of a perverse local government arrangement for the city of Birmingham, which is restricted to 117 councillors for an electorate of almost 750,000.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point about Birmingham. The solution in terms of local government reform is to be found in the city of Glasgow, which has single-member wards and an election every four years. Such a system would give the commission greater flexibility and result in a more satisfactory arrangement for local councillors.

Mr. Rooker: I agree. As an alternative to doubling the number of councillors in Birmingham, which would horrify the political leadership there, I would opt for 117 single-member wards, with each councillor responsible to only 6,500 electors. That is much better than three councillors with 19,000 electors.

That massive shift in the electorate and the massive increase of 2·7 million electors is the result of the successful policies of post-war Labour Governments. The beginning of the building of the new towns, slum clearance in urban areas and rebuilding at lower densities has shifted the population out of urban areas and improved the quality of life but the consequences for electoral geography have prejudiced my party.

I do not share the view of my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook that the review will lead to a net Labour gain. Surely something has gone wrong with our electoral and political systems when it is assumed automatically that rural dwellers vote Tory while those who live in urban areas vote Labour. There is a divide in our society, and when it is considered in black and white terms, it is clear that something has gone wrong with the poilitical process over the decades since the war at least, and probably since the 1930s.

The divide is not to be found in continental Europe —I know that those words will be almost like red rag to a bull to many hon. Members—and that is something that both main parties must remember. It is the divide that brings the knee-jerk reaction. If boundary changes bring extra seats for the shirtes, there are those who immediately shout, "Gerrymandering!" There is no gerrymandering if we are seeking merely to make the size of constituencies more equal.

Local inquiries take place before it is decided how a town or constituency shall be divided, and the area can be cut like a cake or a doughnut. The process can have massive party political consequences as expressed in the membership of the House. As I have said, it is not gerrymandering if we seek to have electorates of equal size.

Intellectually, I have no answer to the Birmingham-Glasgow argument, which has been advanced today and other occasions. I merely say that I hope that the commissions will insist on the crossing of London borough boundaries. London is already over-provided with parliamentary seats, with 84 instead of 81. The metropolitan districts are no different from London boroughs; when we drive from one borough to another, we do not know that we have made the crossing. Manchester and Trafford, Oldham and Rochdale, Salford and Wigan, Stockport and Tameside, Gateshead and Newcastle, and Leeds and Wakefield all have crossed boundaries. If it is good enough for them, it is good enough for London, and crossed boundaries will destroy the over-provision of seats in London. There is a strong case for ensuring that London borough boundaries are crossed.

I say from a party point of view that it is desirable that there be a crossed boundary between Dudley and

Sandwell, to avoid the unnecessary loss of a constituency in Sandwell. It is not justified within the west midlands, and it would be protected if the boundary was crossed.

Birmingham and Coventry will lose a seat, and there is nothing that anyone can do or should do about it when it comes to sizing up constituencies. It is important that there is precision when it comes to a date for reports, and the last day of 1994 is reasonable and practical. It is probably what would have happened even without the Bill. However, the Bill brings us precision, which is important.

When the boundaries were last changed—I have not checked this, but I cannot be more than a month out—the House agreed to the necessary orders in March 1983. The general election took place in June of that year. There was little time for constituencies to be formed and for political organisations to be put together. We must understand that political parties are the bedrock of the protection of our democracy, and unless they can organise adequately to fight elections it is democracy that suffers. They did not have sufficient time to do so between March and June.

I think that the next general election will be in the autumn of 1995 rather than in 1996, and on that basis it is important to have plenty of time to organise. Recently, I spent some time working out which 40 Tory Members with marginal constituencies we should target during this Parliament, in the House and their constituencies, to make their lives uncomfortable. After a while, I said to myself, "Hang on, they won't be the same 40 marginals come the election." We do not know where the marginals will be, and we shall not know until the House agrees to the orders that will give effect to the boundary changes. That is a party political consideration, but we are here to talk about it and others.

I agree with those who have said that the Bill represents a lost opportunity. As I said during business questions the other week, the House does not discuss electoral arrangements sufficiently. It is not a practical proposition to do so shortly before an election. When there is to be an election in about 18 months' time, it is not practical to start discussing the minutiae of electoral arrangements, important though they are. The time to do it is shortly after an election, when incidents are fresh in our minds, when we know that we are at least three, three-and-a-half or four years away from the next electoral fight, and when minds are cool. There is certainly time to consider these details in the first and second Session of a Parliament. That is the time to talk about the registration of absent voters.

Last year, I conducted a survey of electoral registration officers to ascertain what they did about absent voters and how they made people aware that they were entitled to vote. Over 50 per cent. responded to a simple questionnaire. Their responses revealed that they responded very differently, and in some instances I was horrified. Some of them told me, "It is not my job to trawl for absent voters." Others told me that they took active steps to ensure that absent voters were registered. The Home Office was not quick enough to take up the matter, but I was impressed that the EROs were prepared to open up and say that they wanted guidance. I know that guidance was issued, but much more could have been done through advance publicity.

It is amazing what it is possible to pick up when travelling on the tube in London. It would be unfair to name him, but one of this country's leading experts on elections and electoral systems was travelling from one of his seminars to another group of students, who would sit and worship at his feet. He told me that he had been at the local government boundary review inquiry that took place in Oxford last week, I believe. Apparently one of the assistant commissioners said that he was prepared to take account of future population.

The Bill allows for future local government boundary changes but not for future population. Indeed, it has never been possible to argue on the basis of future population. It would be unwise for the House to allow assistant commissioners to go down that road, because it would open up legal challenge. Surely we do not want an ordinary boundary redistribution to be delayed by vexatious legal challenge. If account is being taken of future population, we should be chary of the practice.

Mr. McCartney *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Be brief, please.

Mr. McCartney: I shall be, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not have the words in my mouth yet.

My hon. Friend referred to a matter that was raised at Oxford, and I beg to differ with him. It is for the commissioner to take into account of approved planning permissions over an agreed period. On that basis, it is legitimate for him to take into account population trends. A local authority and the Department of the Environment will take them into account when it comes to local authority grants, and certainly rate support grant.

Mr. Rooker: I disagree, because the trends are not votes in ballot boxes. The matter has been dealt with, because it is proposed by means of the Bill to have reviews within shorter periods. Of course, we shall never have perfectly equal constituencies unless we have a rolling register and precise district drawing as they have in the United States. That brings precision, but it destroys communities and causes many difficulties. It would be an extremely dangerous road to follow.

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) that codification is not possible, and that review would be open to unnecessary or vexatiouss legal challenge, which would cause delay. The Labour party suffered from what happened in 1969 and from its attempt legally to delay the review in 1983. That hangs around the neck of the party and raises a large question mark about democracy.

Mr. Winnick: No.

Mr. Rooker: I am making my point. It hangs around the Labour party's neck that we are not quite all right about equality of voting and equality of constituencies. As I said earlier, one of the reasons for that is the electoral geography, which we have allowed to go amiss over the years.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I was not present at the Oxford inquiry, but it is possible that what the assistant commissioner said has been misconstrued. There is a real difference between guesstimating future population movements, as mentioned by the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney), and taking into account increases in the electorate that have already occurred. The quota year is 1991, but already there is another year to consider. During the previous redistribution there was an enormous gap between the quota year and the year being reviewed. Therefore, it is proper to take into account what has happened in the intervening time.

Mr. Rooker: I agree with that point, which was also made earlier. When decisions are made, they should be on the most accurate possible electoral register, notwithstanding missing people, and they should not be tied to the quota dates. If there are substantial changes since the 1991 register, they must be taken into account. The draft proposals for the metropolitan districts will be produced in the early to middle part of 1993, and if there have been massive changes in the electorates, we shall argue strongly for them to be taken into account by the assistant commissioners at the boundary reviews. I accept that that is more difficult in places such as Birmingham, because of the large size of the wards.

If we love the first-past-the-post system with single Members, we must also love and accept boundary changes. I do not agree with the current electoral system, which is not as fair as it could be. A system that allows a party with 42 per cent. of the vote consistently to provide more than 50 per cent. of Members of Parliament does not have the necessary fairness required in a modern democracy. However, this is not the time to argue that point; I merely place it on the record.

We must accept that the review of boundaries and its consequences are part and parcel of our electoral system, and we cannot run away from that. I say to hon. Members who were not here before 1983 that later this year, when the other tranche of shire county draft reports are published, and during next year when the London boroughs and the metropolitan draft reports are published, one thing will dominate the conversation in this place. If not in the Chamber, certainly in the Corridors, the Library, the Tea Rooms, the Bars and on the Terrace—or where any two Members are speaking together—the conversation will be, "How have the boundary changes been for you?" It is the ultimate vested interest——

Mr. Winnick: The selection and the reselection.

Mr. Rooker: My hon. Friend is right. It is the ultimate vested interest, and that is why there is a need for more independence and a greater arm's-length relationship. Those outside should not see us controlling the drawing of the boundaries and think that it is Members of Parliament who fix them. We should remember that, for every one of us in this place, there was at least one other person who sought to be here in our stead in April 1992.

8.23 pm

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) on his excellent, balanced and interesting maiden speech. It was reasonably non-controversial, but none the less effective and forceful in both content and delivery. He acknowledged the tremendous work and service of his predecessor, Sir Hal Miller, and he told us of the delights of his constituency. His knowledge and experience of local government mean that he will be a most welcome addition to the Conservative Benches and we look forward to many more speeches from him in the next few years.

I am pleased to participate in this important debate. The issue of boundaries, whether parliamentary or local government, has concerned a considerable number of my constituents in the past few years. Naturally, it raises both local, general and specific issues.

The Bill is small in size but large in importance. I especially welcome it because it will speed up the review of and report on parliamentary boundaries. I have never believed that time alone makes for good or better decisions. Often a more rigorous timetable might better concentrate minds. The Bill will require the next reports from the boundary commission to be submitted by 31 December 1994. That will be welcomed by the vast majority of rational and interested people. In particular, my constituents will recognise the logic behind the Bill and will be grateful for more regular reviews of parliamentary boundaries.

Apart from the gross unfairness to the people of Britain of the wide variations in the number of electors in parliamentary constituencies, too long a period without change merely exacerbates the problem. Populations change and areas develop or decline, sometimes rapidly. It is unacceptable that such vast differencies in size of electorates in parliamentary constituencies should be allowed to exist for up to 15 years. That is too long a period. The Bill will ensure that the necessary changes are made sooner that that.

Constituencies range in electoral size from 100,000 to under 40,000, which is wrong, unfair and unjustifiable. We all accept and agree that constituencies cannot and should not all be exactly the same size, but the size variation is just too great. The average of 69,500 should surely allow the range of between 60,000 and 80,000. That would be reasonable and therefore more acceptable. The current range is too great.

My constituency of Erith and Crayford was formed out of the old Dartford division and was altered in the last boundary commission review before the 1983 general election. It lost the two wards of Barnehurst and Barnehurst, North to the neighbouring Bexleyheath constituency. That was done to achieve a more equal size of electorate between my constituency and Bexleyheath. In the previous decade, the population and electorate of my constituency increased with the building of many new housing developments. In addition, there was the growth of the new town of Thamesmead in the north of my constituency, which was built on reclaimed marsh land.

Mr. Tony Banks: By the Greater London council.

Mr. Evennett: If the GLC had done its job properly, the town would have been developed much more effectively and conclusively a long time ago. Unfortunately, under the hon. Gentleman's regime in the Labour-controlled GLC, it was stop and start for poor Thamesmead. That is why problems remain today. However, I will not allow the hon. Gentleman to divert me: I want to spend a little time talking about Thamesmead because that town is relevant to the Bill's provisions.

The town of Thamesmead is a self-governing trust under the excellent leadership of its chairman, Mr. Alan Cummings, and its chief executive, Mr. Philip Glascow. It straddles the borough boundary of Bexley and Greenwich and is split between the two parliamentary constituencies of Woolwich and Erith and Crayford. The local government boundary commission, which I regret has taken almost five years to review Thamesmead's position, has recently recommended that the Bexley part of the town —the ward of Thamesmead East—be transferred to Greenwich.

Although I accept that today's debate is on the parliamentary boundaries, and therefore is not the time to argue why the status quo on local government should remain and the wishes of the Bexley residents of Thamesmead be upheld, an important issue is involved. I do not know whether the Secretary of State for the Environment intends to accept the local government report on Thamesmead. With the 10,000 electors of Thamesmead East ward, I hope that the Secretary of State will reject the recommendation and listen to the people.

If, however, the Secretary of State decides against the wishes of the people, what will happen to the parliamentary boundary? I shall continue to press him to heed the wishes of the people and to allow Thamesmead East ward to remain in Bexley. I hope that he will see sense, since the local government boundary commission failed to do so.

Will the parliamentary boundary, according to the Bill, automatically follow the local government boundary? I listened with interest to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), although I did not agree with all of them. He raised the important issue of London. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) referred to Birmingham and to the fact that parliamentary boundaries straddle local government boundaries in other parts of the United Kingdom. On this occasion I agreed with the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who disagreed with the hon. Member for Perry Barr. I hope that the Minister will take note of the concerns of Members with London constituencies. The boundary of Greater London is out of date and I look forward to Ministers telling us how they view the future of parliamentary boundaries in London as it is a very important issue.

My constituents in Thamesmead East ward want to stay in Bexley and in the Erith and Crayford constituency. If the Secretary of State for the Environment agreed to the local government boundary commission decision to put them into Greenwich, would they be forced out of Bexley and also out of Erith and Crayford, since the parliamentary boundary would follow the local government boundary?

Mr. Tony Banks: Bexley supported the 1981 proposal to put Thamesmead East into Greenwich. Why has it changed its position?

Mr. Evennett: I was not around in 1981, but the people of Thamesmead East want to stay in Bexley. They also want to stay in Erith and Crayford. Bexley council showed good sense in taking note of the wishes of the people. It has backed the people in their stand to remain part of Bexley. In a referendum, 96 per cent. of the people in Thamesmead East ward wanted to stay in Bexley and in Erith and Crayford. Bexley council, a first-class council, should be commended on its support for the local people.

In London, parliamentary boundaries traditionally do not cross local government boundaries. What is to happen in the future? In my opinion, coterminous boundaries of borough and parliamentary constituencies in London have much to commend them. The opportunity to deal with just one local authority allows one to give a better service as a Member of Parliament to constituents. It is also much better for the community. My hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove and others said in their excellent speeches how important this is for the community. My hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove mentioned Edmund Burke and his view of community.

We have experienced difficulties in London, due to the artificial creation nearly 30 years ago of the London boroughs. A sense of identity is now beginning to emerge in those boroughs. The people who live and work there now identify themselves with my borough of Bexley. Surely we do not want to destroy that by creating parliamentary boundaries which cross borough boundaries. The result would be to diminish the affinity with the boroughs, which would be a retrograde step.

Crayford people remember Crayford urban district council with great affection. Even though Bexley took the Crayford motto "Boldly and Rightly" as the Bexley motto for the borough, it has taken a long time for the people of Crayford to look towards Bexley rather than towards Crayford. If we are not careful, we shall run the terrible risk of losing that developing affinity with the borough of Bexley. The people of Thamesmead and other people in my constituency will be grateful if the Minister can say what will happen to them if a local government boundary change takes place.

Boundary changes and reforms are emotive issues. Constituency names change and cause problems. Some people disapprove of them. Communities do not like alterations made simply to suit the logic of bureaucrats.

An important additional issue commands great support. There should not be vast discrepancies in constituency size. The boundary commission has to balance the two sides—on the one side maintaining communities, and on the other removing unfairness and anomalies in the system.

Mr. McCartney: So far, the hon. Gentleman has not addressed the issue before us in the Bill—the parliamentary constituencies. Can he confirm that under the proposals both Greenwich and Bexley will lose constituencies?

Mr. Evennett: It depends on the flexibility that the boundary commission adopts. I intend to refer to figures which suggest that both Bexley and Greenwhich should keep three Members each. The boundary commission has a difficult task to perform. Conservative Members commend the chairman and members of the boundary commission for their work, even if sometimes we think that they get it wrong and therefore do not always support their conclusions.

Today, with the greater movement of population and rapid changes in certain areas of the country, there is a definite need for more frequent boundary changes. The emphasis here is on the word "frequently". There has been an increase in population in the suburbs of London and a decline in population in the inner city areas. In that part of London which is near my constituency, there may be good reasons for small electorates in certain areas. I was disappointed, however, when my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said that he would not look at the size of electorates in Scotland as some of my hon. Friends and I believe that Scotland is terribly over-represented in this place. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West has already referred to the fact that there are 46,000 electors in his constituency.

Mr. Tony Banks: No—47,000.

Mr. Evennett: There are 51,000 electors in Newham, South. Greenwich has only 48,000 electors. My constituency has just under 60,000, and the number is growing. Woolwich has an electorate of 56,000. Those constituencies are small in the eyes of some people in rural areas. The Isle of Wight is a vast constituency, with an electorate of 100,000. Changes are needed in London. Inner-city London will lose seats, while outer London will keep its representation.

Mr. Tony Banks: How will that work?

Mr. Evennett: That is a problem that we shall have to address. I believe that it will work in London. It is possible to be both fair and effective.

Mr. Winnick: Do hurry up a bit.

Mr. Evennett: No, I am trying to educate the hon. Gentleman, who often makes comments from a sedentary position on issues that we believe to be important.

It is unacceptable to have vast discrepancies in the size of the electorate. I have sought to highlight today the specific problems that we have in London, which I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will take on board.

The Bill is short, it is easy to understand, it is easy to implement, and it is designed to improve our system of representative democracy. It is undoubtedly a small measure, but it is an important one which will speed up the boundary commission, make its reports more frequent, and ensure that the fairest possible boundaries are established to prevent the anomalies that we have seen in the recent past. The Bill has my strong support and I believe that it will be supported by all political parties because it will present a fairer system. We are looking for a more equal electorate, better representation, and a fairer distribution of seats. The Bill goes a long way towards that.

8.40 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) on presenting a wonderful piece of special pleading. He raised an interesting point. As I said in an intervention, I remember that, in 1981, Tory Bexley was happy that Thamesmead, East, which the hon. Gentleman has described, should go into Greenwich. At that time, Greenwich opposed the move. They have now switched positions; Greenwich is in favour and Bexley is opposed. I can assume only that both local authorities, which are under different political control, have done their political homework and have worked out who will gain and who will lose. It is true, as my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) said, that Greenwich and Bexley will lose a seat each.

Mr. Evennett: No.

Mr. Banks: The proposal is for one seat from each borough. What we witnessed was the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford doing a good representation of a maggot squirming on the end of a hook. I do not know whether his right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will assist him or will see him gobbled up. No doubt we shall find out in due course.

You may call me an old cynic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you wish, but I am one of the hon. Members who believe that the Bill should be called the Save the Tory Party at the Next Election Bill. Obviously I have no objections in principle to a review of parliamentary boundaries. Who would have? However, as a number of my hon. Friends have said, the Bill misses the real problem of the electoral register. The terms of reference given to the boundary commission are also extremely limited.

It is difficult for us not to take into account—perhaps I am being over-cynical—the fact that the smart money says that the Tory party will achieve a net gain of about 20 seats from the Bill. I was rather surprised to hear my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) say that there could be a Labour gain from the Bill. In theory there could be, but it seems that the way in which the Bill will work out will inevitably lead to a net gain of about 20 seats for the Tory party. Looking at the Home Secretary, I cannot believe that that fact entirely escaped his notice when the Bill was drawn up and when the Government considered what the boundary commission would mean for the Tories at the next election.

The real issue is not the size of the constituencies; the number on the electoral register is the crucial point. We can point to clear discrepancies. The Home Secretary referred to the fact that 95 per cent. of people were on the register. That sounds like a high success rate. However, it naturally means that 5 per cent. of people are not on the register. Translated into the electorate, that means that about 2 million people are not registered and are therefore not eligible to vote. As some of my hon. Friends have said, that 5 per cent. is not equally distributed around the country.

I should like to have heard the Home Secretary say —it might have made me more kindly disposed towards the Bill—that there would be extra resources for the electoral registration process, rather than extra resources for the constituency carve-up. The trouble is that registration in inner-city areas can mean that an electoral register can be anything up to 17 per cent. inaccurate by the time it is published. It is an extraordinarily difficult matter.

Conservative Members who represent inner-city constituencies will know how difficult it is to locate people, to make a point of contact and to ensure that they are on the electoral register. In constituencies such as mine in the east end of London, many people live in flats and many in houses in multiple occupation. There are many hostels and there is a growing number of homeless people in the inner-city areas.

Where are the votes of all the people who sleep in doorways down the Strand or in the cardboard cities? They are entitled to vote. Indeed, it could be argued that they have a greater vested interest than many other people in getting a Government who are attentive to their problems. They do not have a vote because they are kept on the move. When the Prime Minister was a Social Security Minister, he introduced changes in social security provision which meant that there was a growing band of people who were shuffled around as they went through the period of qualification for payment in various parts of the country. There are an awful lot of people who simply never appear on the registers.

There is also a transient population of those who are looking for jobs and are moving from one area to another. The advice from Norman Tebbit was, "Get on your bike."

Unfortunately, what did not go with that was the ability to vote when one got on one's bike if one turned up in the right place too late.

What we should like to have heard from the Home Secretary and what we should like to hear even now is that more resources will be put into a registration campaign and that more effort will be made to get people on to the register. The Government could find the money to advertise in South Africa, on the Costa del Sol and everywhere else they thought that they could pick up a few votes from people who have been out of the country for 25 years. I only wish that they would show as much concern for those who have no intention of living abroad, who still live here and who want to participate in the democratic process.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We show far more concern for those resident in this country, which is why we advertise every year. The advertising for those abroad was a one-off when the new provisions came into effect.

Mr. Banks: I take the point, although I suspect that such a concentrated appeal will be a one-off every time a general election comes up as long as the Conservatives are in government. Advertising for registration must be continuous. There must be a substantial flow of resources from central Government to local authorities, backed up by continual campaigning using all the media to ensure that people get themselves on to the register.

My borough is one that seems likely to lose a seat. I should not mind if I felt that there was a genuine movement out of the borough of Newham which would justify a change to a lower level of parliamentary representation, but the figures in Newham simply do not express the real size of the population and of the people who are eligible to vote in terms of age qualification. I know that some people deliberately excluded themselves from the register in my area, as elsewhere, because they did not want to pay the poll tax, but, as I said earlier, we had the peculiar situation in Newham that at one stage more people were on the poll tax register than were on the electoral register.

It seems that not enough effort is being put into getting people on to the electoral register. Many people in London especially have been and are being disfranchised. The ballot box is supposed to underpin our democratic system, but if people are denied access to the democratic system through the register or if many barriers are put in the way of their getting that access, our democracy is flawed. People have been disfranchised, which should worry all hon. Members who are concerned about the democratic process.

Our system of registration and voting is wholly outmoded. If it is a question of a national insurance number or of the Inland Revenue, one tends to be hunted down—quite rightly, and we do not argue about that. It is right that people should pay taxes and that they should be on the national insurance register. That is very important. After all, decisions that affect tax are taken in this place. The only way to achieve representation in this place is to vote for the people here. I wish that we would show as much priority and concern about the electoral register as we quite rightly give to those who should pay tax and those who should be registered for national insurance purposes.

The system is outmoded. People are excluded from registration because they move. I understand why one should vote in the constituency in which one lives. That clearly makes a great deal of sense. However, I see no reason why the ability to vote should not move with us and be transferred easily with us.

People enter polling stations at general elections and see the pencil on a bit of string and the plywood booth. I see no reason why one should not be given an electoral registration number at birth that can be activated at whatever age we decide people should be eligible to vote. At the moment that is 18 although, at some point, it may be reduced to 16. Instead of going to the clerk in the polling stations who has to thumb through a book, one's number and address would be fed into a computer terminal. It would then be easy to discover whether someone had been moving around. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) may laugh at that. Well, I may not have worked out all the nuts and bolts. No doubt, if he applies his considerable abilities, he will be able to make my inchoate scheme that much more efficient.

However, it seems to be nonsense that people can lose the ability to vote because they have moved. There are postal votes and ways of referring back to constituencies, but those are obstacles in the way of exercising one's democratic right. We should remove as many of those obstacles as possible.

My final point about my borough of Newham is that it looks as though we are going to lose a seat. We will live with that if that is the case. However, Newham at the moment has the fastest birth rate in the country. In view of what is going on, I am going to try to speed it up a little as soon as I leave the House tonight. I might also point out that Forest Gate also has the highest incidence of car theft in the country. It is now clear what they are all doing in the backs of those stolen cars on Wanstead flats. Jolly good luck to them. They must work a lot harder. The Minister should consider the fact that the population is growing in Newham and perhaps we should not lose one of our excellent Members of Parliament for that borough.

Several Hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Four hon. Members hope to catch my eye and I understand that the winding-up speeches are expected to begin at 9.30 pm. With a little co-operation, I hope to be able to call all the hon. Members who wish to speak.

8.52 pm

Mr. Robert Dunn (Dartford): I will bear in mind what you have said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I will confine myself to 10 minutes or less.

I welcome the Bill, because it is wrong that the next election should be fought on boundaries that reflect population figures allocated and arrived at in 1976. To fight the next general election on boundaries which by then will be more than 20 years out of date is wrong and undemocratic.

I rise at this late hour in an attempt to urge my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to reconsider his earlier remarks. In response to a question from one of my hon. Friends who asked whether the Government would consider setting up a boundary commission for the whole of the United Kingdom, the Home Secretary said that that would not be possible because it would require primary legislation. This Bill is primary legislation. The

[Mr. Robert Dunn]

position in the House, in the country and in the Conservative party has reached a point at which the over-representation of Scotland—and of Wales, to a lesser extent—cannot be sustained any longer.

I understand the historical protocol and arguments that have applied in the past. On many occasions I have been reminded of the fact that the first prescription for seat numbers in Scotland arose from the Act of Union of 1707 which prescribed that the number of seats for Scotland should be 45. Over the centuries that followed, that figure has risen to more than 70.

It is clear to everyone in the House that the English average of 69,000—plus is way above that in Scotland of more than 54,000. If we had a boundary commission for the United Kingdom as a whole, working perhaps to a figure of 65,000, we would still arrive at a figure of 650 Members of Parliament. That is the upper limit for representation to the House.

The Select Committee on Home Affairs which reported in 1987 got itself into a bit of a state with regard to the over-representation of Scotland and Wales. At paragraph 67 it stated:

"The present rules allow for over-representation of Scotland and Wales, for reasons which have been considered sound in the past. But there has been no review of the statutory rules for some time."

That is the precise point. The rules were "sound in the past". Earlier today, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said that he had some sympathy with what he believed were the legitimate demands of the Scottish and Welsh people for some form of government. He did not have time to develop the point about the kind of government, but he thought that it was right that they should have a form of devolution.

If Wales and Scotland have a form of devolution and a greater say as nations over their affairs, it would clearly be wrong to sustain the level of over-representation as it is now. The Select Committee on Home Affairs went on to state in paragraph 67:

"If . . . it is judged that Scotland and Wales should continue to receive special treatment to give them an effective voice in parliamentary affairs, there may still be a case for reducing the difference between the standards of representation of the different countries of the United Kingdom by making some modest changes in the number of seats."

There is common agreement across the House that we do not want to continue to add to the number of hon. Members in the House, for good reasons which I will not go into now.

On the one hand, there are special factors of sparsity, population, work-load and geographical distances which apply in some parts of Scotland, as the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) will confirm. However, such arguments cannot apply to Glasgow, where there are 11 seats ranging from 36,560 in 1992 for the seat of Glasgow, Provan to the dizzy heights of 57,223 for Glasgow, Hillhead. Clearly, there is no argument in Glasgow, Edinburgh or the central belt of Scotland for sustaining over-representation when a boundary commission could simply apply the United Kingdom average of 67,000 and thereby reduce the number of seats. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take that point on board.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dunn: I am confining myself to 10 minutes, I am afraid. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand if I do not give way.

There is a strong argument—I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will respond to it—for a single boundary commission for the United Kingdom. Paragraph 20 of the Home Affairs Select Committee's 1987 report states:

"Nevertheless we believe it ought to be explained that it would not be difficult technically to amend the Rules to achieve a uniform UK quota."

Exactly so. I hope that my hon. Friend will respond and let us know why we cannot use this primary legislation to effect a boundary commission for the United Kingdom as a whole and put parliamentary representation on all fours across the whole of the United Kingdom.

8.58 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Lest there be any misunderstanding, of course I accept the need for regular reviews of constituency boundaries. It has never been disputed in the House that boundaries need to be reviewed. It is a totally illogical argument, and one which I certainly am not advancing, that the boundaries that were previously agreed should remain for years to come without review or revision at all.

The concept of boundary changes and so on should be as politically impartial as possible and with full co-operation between the parties. I do not believe that the way in which the Government have acted brings about that objective. It is a desirable objective that the concept and operation of boundary reviews should be politically impartial. We learned from my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) that there has not been any approach from the Government to the Opposition, and I am not at all surprised that that is so.

We may be considered on this side to be cynical about the exercise, but it is interesting to note that, almost as soon as the election was over, when the Government were re-elected with a much reduced overall majority, we read in the newspapers, perhaps two or three days after 9 April, that one of the first items that the Government were considering and would almost certainly put in the Queen's Speech was this Bill. The press concluded that the Government hoped to gain 10 to 20 seats. I may be cynical, as I have said, but I do not believe that the Bill would be before us if the Government were not of the view that some advantage was to be gained.

If it is said that that is an unfortunate view to take of the Government and that they are motivated, as the Home Secretary said, by the best of intentions, I remind the House of what happened in the previous Parliament, when there was a Bill stating that people who were overseas for a long period should be given the vote. The Opposition Front Bench decided, in my view wrongly, to support the Government. Several of my hon. Friends and I voted against the Bill. If there is any regret, it is among those in my party who decided to support that measure. I saw no justification for it. Although there is undoubtedly a case that people who go abroad for short periods should continue to have the vote, that should not be done in the way that the Government decided at that time.

We know the Government's record in local government —for example, the abolition of metropolitan county councils, and the Greater London council. Of course, they

were Labour-controlled. They were an irritant to the Government of the day and they were duly abolished. When one sees the matter in that context, it is perhaps more understandable why I have many misgivings about this Bill.

I would much rather have had, before there was any Bill, a wide-ranging debate on various matters connected with the electoral process. Polling cards have been mentioned. During the election, I received several telephone calls from an area in my constituency. The Post Office had made an error. The polling cards did arrive on time, but the people were deeply concerned when they were late. They were obviously conscientious and wanted to vote. I contacted the Post Office, but I explained to the people concerned that they did not need to have a polling card. That is not generally understood and it is one factor that we should take into account.

There is another, far more important factor, and that is the number of people—25 per cent. or more—who have never participated in the electoral process and do not vote in local or national elections. Of course the figure of non-voters is considerably higher in respect of local government elections. Is there a case for a form of compulsory voting, as in Australia? We have not had the opportunity to debate those matters and it is quite likely that we will not be able to do so in Committee.

On population changes, of course it would be unfortunate if there was no review of boundaries over a long period. However, it is undesirable to change constituency boundaries too frequently, because people identify with their constituencies. Much more attention should be given—and would have been given if there had been a general debate on the subject before the Bill was produced.

There should have been more time for consultation and for consideration of other matters. I am not satisfied that the Bill will provide sufficient time for consultation and public inquiries and for representations to be made, if the deadline of December 1994 is to be met.

The hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), who has now left the Chamber, and several other hon. Members referred to what they considered to be the over-representation of Scotland and Wales. I was a member of the Home Affairs Select Committee which considered the matter. The Committee decided to make no recommendation for change. It is far more appropriate for Members of Parliament who represent Scottish and Welsh constituencies to make the point, but this sensitive moment, especially for Scotland, where various matters are being debated, is not the time to suggest that those areas are over-represented.

I can only conclude that the reason why Conservative Members raise what they believe to be the over-representation of Scotland and Wales is that those constituencies mainly vote Labour. Does anyone believe that if those constituencies voted Tory the comments that we have heard tonight would be made?

I have given consideration to whether I should support the Bill by not seeking to divide the House. I feel uneasy in my mind, for the reasons that I have given and others —I could not deal with all of them for lack of time. I feel that the Bill has been introduced not in the interests of democracy, or to allow the review of boundaries which is obviously essential, but because the Government are determined to do whatever they can to obtain extra seats. They may turn out to be wrong and I hope that they will, but they believe that they will gain extra seats. They are working on the assumption so widely reported in the press that there are seats to be gained and therefore they have introduced the Bill.

As I feel so uneasy and believe that I was proved right with some of my hon. Friends on votes for people living overseas, I have come to the conclusion that it will be right to divide the House at 10 o'clock.

9.6 pm

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) implied that somehow something other than objectivity was involved either in the timing of the review or in the proposals which may or may not come forth from the boundary commission. The boundary commission is utterly objective. It works to its own timetable. It is independent. If my memory serves me correctly, the only Home Secretary since the second world war to have messed about subjectively with the process was a Labour Home Secretary in the 1970s, who deferred the proper period within which the boundary commission should report because he feared that the redistribution of electors between constituencies might work to the disadvantage of his party.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) said that, in the interests of objectivity, if there is greater devolution of power to Scotland—apparently that agenda is now open, but we have yet to learn whether it is—the quid pro quo is surely that there should be equality. That is all that we are saying. There should be equality, or as close as one can get to it, between the number of constituents per Member of Parliament in Scotland and in the rest of the United Kingdom.

For the sake of argument, let us assume that there was not a Conservative victory at the last general election and that the right hon. Friends of the hon. Member for Walsall, North are therefore on the Government Bench. We should have been asked to contemplate the creation of regional councils—a sort of devolution for England. To justify the over-representation of Scotland, England would have had to be given its devolution as a fig leaf to protect that arrangement.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) made an admirable maiden speech. He spoke with great conviction and style about the cohesion of local communities, the loyalty that one should have to the platoon as compared with the army, and the sense of loyalty to local communities. I endorse that strongly, because—here I declare a non-pecuniary interest—I am president of an organisation called the Association of British Counties, which is dedicated to the restoration wherever necessary of the traditional and historic counties of England and Wales. That is germane to the Bill and much has been said about the need for the boundary commission to be as faithful as possible to the loyalties of people who have a sense of belonging to their local communities.

I am ashamed to say that in the 1970s, when a good deal happened which should not have happened, a Conservative Administration destroyed a number of ancient counties and went on to introduce aberrations which were much hated by people all over the country —the metropolitan county councils. Thank goodness the days of Humberside—whatever that is—appear to be

[Mr. John Butcher]

numbered, and the people of north Lincolnshire and the east riding of Yorkshire may have their counties back again. I hope that the rump of West Midlands metropolitan county council will also be destroyed soon.

I also issue a plea for the redundancy of the lord lieutenant of West Midlands metropolitan county council. I believe that the lord lieutenant who goes into proud cities such as Birmingham should be the lord lieutenant of Warwickshire, while the one who goes into Wolverhampton and—dare I say it—Walsall should be the lord lieutenant of Staffordshire. Their heritage should be returned to them and, wherever possible, the boundary commissioner should ensure that his boundaries coincide with their ancient, historic counterparts.

Choosing a county—entirely at random, of course—which should be restored to its former glory, I refer to Huntingdon. The same possibly applies to Rutland, and it certainly applies to Westmorland and Cumberland. Let us get rid of that awful thing called Avon and give the people of Somerset their identity back.

All over the country there are old loyalties that should be respected. I hope that, when my hon. Friend the Minister of State considers the guidance from the boundary commission, he will remind Sir John Banham that—working within the Department of the Environment, and reporting to it—another commission, the local government boundary commission, has already accepted guidelines to the effect that, if one-tier local government is introduced, the reform will be easier to accept if ancient loyalties are given full expression and ancient boundaries restored. The creation of Humberside may have made the acceptance of such a reform highly unlikely and very unpopular, but the restoration of the ancient county names will make a number of proposals for one-tier authorities very acceptable, provided that wherever possible the new boundaries are coterminous with the ancient county boundaries.

My hon. Friend is faced with a comparatively easy task. He will merely apply fairness, helping to bring about a position that is as close as possible to equality of size in constituencies throughout the country. The boundary commission works to its own timetable, according to its own criteria and with its own sense of fairness. The best thing that the House can do is to give the Bill an unopposed Second Reading, in the knowledge that it may help us to solve other problems—not least in areas such as Scotland.

9.13 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I speak on behalf of the people of West Yorkshire, who could lose a parliamentary seat if the review is not carried out honestly and correctly. I am sure, however, that the arguments that the people will advance will justify the continued existence of the 23 constituencies in the area.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) referred to the historic counties. The West Riding county council was, indeed, such a historic county, but it was abolished by a Tory Minister. The people in the area will never forget that it was the Conservatives who abolished it. The quicker we reinstate the former West Riding county council the better.

The township of Ossett in my constituency will suffer again, if one West Yorkshire constituency is removed. In 1983, Ossett was moved from the Dewsbury constituency into the Normanton constituency. If the suggested revision takes place under this review, Ossett could be moved again, this time into the constituency of Morley and Leeds, South. It is unfair to shuffle communities about simply to make up numbers, without having regard to the impact on those communities. That is why I intervened in the Home Secretary's opening statement to ask whether the legislation allows sufficient time for consultation to obtain the views of local people.

Clause 2 refers to the change of dates. It is against that background that I ask whether there is sufficient time for people to make the necessary observations on behalf of their communities. It is not just that Ossett was moved from Dewsbury into Normanton; part of it was moved into the Wakefield constituency to make up numbers. Communities are not only shuffled from one constituency to another; but they are divided to make up the numbers that the boundary commission requires of a constituency according to its formula.

The boundary commission newsletter states:

"The Commission announced the commencement of the general review of all parliamentary constituency boundaries throughout England on 21 January 1991. A report on the Commission's review must be submitted to the Home Secretary not earlier than 1 February 1993 and no later than 31 January 1998. It is too early to estimate when the report will be completed but it is unlikely to be before mid 1995."

Yet the Bill provides that the report should be produced 12 months before the date which the commission says it will have difficulty meeting under existing legislation. Therefore, I put it to the Minister that the timetable is so tight that communities such as Ossett will not have an opportunity to consider the implications of further boundary changes to their constituencies.

We are also told that local inquiries into such changes will last up to one week. Again, communities are denied the opportunity of time to present their case as to why their community should not be divided and shuffled from one constituency to another. It is appalling to limit the time for a first public inquiry to one week. There is also the question of the local government boundary commission and the problems that exist in Wales. The Secretary of State for Wales is shuffling around the proposals for the boundaries of local authorities in Wales, which will have an effect on constituency boundaries.

Are the Government being fair to people in constituencies by introducing the Bill in the apparent haste they are, given the details of its various clauses? At present, West Yorkshire has 23 constituencies. Under the proposals, theoretically, West Yorkshire would have 22·74 constituencies, given the number of people on the 1991 electoral register. If the theoretical number of constituencies is more than 22·5, West Yorkshire should retain its 23 seats.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Of course.

Mr. O'Brien: My hon. Friend accepts my argument. It is justifiable for West Yorkshire to plan to retain 23 seats. If the commission argues that the figure of 22·5 or 22·74, depending on how one looks at the statistics, is not sufficient to retain 23 seats, it should consider the projected electorate for 1996. As has already been said, we should also consider the proportion of the eligible adult population that is registered in constituencies so that the

number of eligible electors is equalised between constituencies. That would mean that the theoretical figures would take account of the projected electoral registers.

The Secretary of State stated that he thought that 95 per cent. registration was a good figure. The Home Office may have told the boundary commission that 95 per cent. registration would be sufficient, but the addition of the unregistered 5 per cent. in West Yorkshire, which will have 22·74 theoretical constituencies, would justify the retention of 23 seats.

The boundary commission must approach the revision of boundaries carefully. The Minister of State should consider its programme carefully. If local communities and interested bodies, including political parties, are not allowed to present their case to the commission, or if the right of appeal is so restricted that the ability of those groups to put their case is limited, the Government will not be acting in the best interests of the people in the constituencies affected. I am making a special plea for West Yorkshire because due allowance must be made in all circumstances for proven under-registration or anticipated growth in an area before a decision is taken to reduce the number of seats in a county.

The Government and the boundary commission must allow time, because the haste with which the Bill has been introduced is not in the best interests of communities throughout the United Kingdom, particularly in West Yorkshire. I ask the Minister to give careful thought to what I have said on behalf of the people and communities in West Yorkshire.

9.24 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Before I turn to the substance of the debate, I should mention the two maiden speeches today. The first was by the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards), who paid a generous tribute to his predecessor, Sir Anthony Meyer. Opposition Members remember when Sir Anthony acted as stalking horse in 1989 and we certainly appreciated his efforts. Many Conservative Members also appreciated his efforts, but could not say so until the fall of their then leader. It is clear that the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West will make many interesting speeches. His tone is more loyal than that of his predecessor. Having been a broadcaster at the BBC, he should have a word with some of his colleagues who believe that the BBC is populated with Trotskyites. Clearly, he at least has slipped through the net.

The hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thompson) also made a powerful and effective speech although, unlike the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West, his speech was controversial. Personally, I thoroughly approve of that and I am sure that we shall get to grips with some of the matters that he raised. Unfortunately, he is no longer in his place, but he will no doubt read these remarks in the morning.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said in opening the debate on behalf of the Opposition, it is unfortunate that the only measure on constitutional reform which the Government are likely to introduce is to bring forward the boundary commission review. From speeches made on both sides of the House, it is obvious that there is a significant and substantial interest in constitutional reform. Conservative Members who have complained at length about the alleged over-representation of some parts of the United Kingdom and suggested possible constitutional change should be aware that there is no point in considering matters of constitutional change individually. If there is to be change, by all means let us discuss it. It is unfortunate that today's debate takes place only on a narrow principle—the undeniable question of population change and the necessity for a fresh boundary review to be set up.

The principle of the Bill is that the population has changed and therefore the pattern of constituency representation must also change. No one would quarrel with that. Our quarrel will arise at a later stage when we discuss the detail of the Bill and the way in which the changes will be made. We are concerned not about the fact that the review is taking place but about the way it is likely to take place. Hon. Members will be aware that the Committee stage must be taken on the Floor of the House because of the nature of the Bill. I assure the Government that we shall seek to divide the House on a number of occasions unless they make the concessions and changes that we consider necessary. We are worried about the rules and guidelines under the 1986 Act and shall want to refer to those.

Clause 2 deals with the period in which the boundary commission must review the matter. Initially, the period was three to seven years, which was rightly felt to be too short; it is now 10 to 15 years, and the Government propose that we should reconsider the matter every eight to 12 years.

I have some sympathy with my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney), who pointed out that the Home Affairs Select Committee recommended against any change. It felt that a Member of Parliament should have a chance to establish a relationship with his constituency. Clearly, if constituency boundaries change regularly, the weight which many people put on the link between a constituency Member and the constituency will be undermined. All those who back our present electoral system and rely heavily on that link should think deeply and at length about the advantages of letting a constituency run for, say, three Parliaments rather than changing it every Parliament or every second Parliament. Sometimes changes are radical, and if a link is to exist the seat should remain in existence for up to three Parliaments. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook said, we favour a fixed term for the review, which would avoid some of the allegations of gerrymandering because the Government could do nothing much about implementing the changes. We think that a 12-year period would be appropriate.

Much of the debate has turned on the alleged discrepancy between the size of constituencies. In England, they range from 42,000 in Surbiton to more than 100,000 in the Isle of Wight. In Scotland, the Western Isles constituency has 23,000 electors and the Gordon constituency 80,000. That shows that there are discrepancies in England and Scotland, just as there are in Wales and Northern Ireland, as has also been pointed out. Discrepancies are inevitable, but they are not confined to one country of the United Kingdom. The hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) said that in London there are a number of small constituencies. If anomalies are to be ironed out, that should also be looked at.

[Mr. Alistair Darling]

While the weight of a vote is important, it is not everything. It would be possible to construct constituencies which were, as near as may be, exactly the same size, but I am sure that every one of us in the House, and every political party in the country, would say that some regard has to be paid to community ties and identifiable areas. I know that, whenever an inquiry takes place, that is what it turns on, not on the numbers. Hon. Members and parties argue fiercely about which ward should be in which constituency because of community ties. Often, community ties are related to the political complexion of the area. Sometimes it is not always clear what the community tie is, and political colour is a far greater tie than any more obvious link that someone who is not biased might think important.

The constituencies of Members of the European Parliament are so large that any idea of community is meaningless. There should always be an identifiable link with a city or a town. It is unfortunate that, in the last review, the boundary commission was prepared to split towns and communities for reasons that were not altogether clear. Most of us believe that community ties are worth considerable weight and I hope that the boundary commission will have some regard to that. I am sorry that the Government did not take the opportunity to make that clear in the Bill.

The hon. Member for Westminster, North said that in London dealing with one council gave the advantage of social cohesion, and the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) agreed. That is fine, but why not elsewhere in the United Kingdom? If it is good enough for London, it is good enough for other parts of the country.

Sir John Wheeler: The hon. Gentleman is right, but there is an important difference in that London has a one-tier local authority system, which other parts of the country do not necessarily have.

Mr. Darling: That is true. However, under clause 3, the Government invite the commission to take account of any future changes that are more likely to result in single tiers. Most urban parts of England also have single-tier local government, so the same argument would obtain in Birmingham or Manchester. I am not sure about the point that the hon. Gentleman wishes to make.

Mr. Rooker: In urban areas, boundaries are crossed in five of the seven metropolitan districts. That means that boundaries in London could also be crossed, because it does not cause a problem of representation.

Mr. Darling: That is so. For the benefit of some of my hon. Friends I should make the point that, when looking for ways in which the boundary commission can be influenced—sometimes it may wish to influence itself—they should have a look at rules 4, 5 and 6 in the 1986 Act. Those rules allow the boundary commission to exercise discretion or influence to be brought to bear making a large difference to the political complexion of the seat. Rule 6, which allows the boundary commission to take account of special geographical considerations—size, shape and accessibility of the constituency—seems to give the commission considerable leeway. We ought to look into that. The guidelines and the way in which the boundary commission conducts itself are of far greater importance than whether the review takes place in 1994 or any other year.

I can never be sure whether Back-Bench Conservative Members who talk about Scotland do so on their own account or whether they have been given a nod and a wink by the Government. Perhaps the Minister will let us know shortly. The hon. Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) referred to people of Scottish and Welsh descent living in English constituencies. That is not the point, which is that the United Kingdom is made up of four separate nations which have come together. Many people value the links between them and want them to continue, although many of us think that the government of this country is in desperate need of improvement.

Scotland is a nation and the argument runs that it should have a large degee of self-government, albeit within the United Kingdom. This is not a narrow nationalist point to do with whether Scots men and women should be governed by Scots men and women. The Home Secretary said that it would be taken amiss if the Government reduced the number of Scottish seats. That was something of an understatement. It would certainly undermine the claims of the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Scotland, who are running around Scotland saying that the Conservatives care deeply about Scotland.

I hope that many people in Scotland will listen to what has been said in this debate. Whatever the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State may say, many Conservative Back Benchers take a different view of Scotland. It is interesting that no Scottish Tory Back Bencher has spoken in support of the proposition that his representation should be reduced. Unless there are to be major constitutional changes hitherto not envisaged, I see no argument for changing the balance as between parliamentary seats in the United Kingdom.

The difficulties in some parts of Scotland have been mentioned. Ross, Cromarty and Skye is small numerically, but it has the largest geographical area of any constituency. To bring the numbers there up to the quota of 68,000, it would be necessary to create a constituency so large that the relevant Member would have difficulty getting around it once in 10 years, let alone once a Parliament.

The opposite applies to the Isle of Wight. There is obviously a good reason to have one Member representing one island with an identifiable sense of community—yet an electorate of 101,000 is way above what would be acceptable in mainland England.

The number of Scottish Members has remained fairly static—from 71, it has become 72—but the number of Members representing English seats has increased as the total has risen from 613 to 651. There are clearly imbalances within England as well as between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

If the Government intend to make further constitutional changes to the relationship between Scotland and Wales and the rest of the United Kingdom, perhaps the Minister will tell us what they are. I understand the Prime Minister to have been saying in Scotland that no changes of substance are planned, so I hope that he will repudiate the views of Tory Back Benchers who want to reduce Scottish representation.

Clause 3 causes us some concern. The press release that heralded the Bill did not refer to it. I refer in particular to the proposal that

"nothing in this subsection shall prevent a Boundary Commission publishing proposed recommendations which take account of boundaries which are not in operation at the time of publication."

I should like to know what that means. Does it mean that such boundaries have to be in existence somewhere but not in operation? Will it be open to interest groups to argue that the Government have perhaps proposed local government boundary changes that the boundary commission ought to take into consideration?

In the next few years, the pattern that the Government have in mind for England and possibly for Scotland will become clear. If the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), is to be believed, just about every village, parish and collection of houses that wants a local government boundary will get one. Will it be open to those making submissions to the boundary commission to argue for substantially different boundaries?

Part of clause 3 is far too widely drawn and I suspect that the Government will use that to try to urge the commission to get further than it otherwise would in drawing up boundary changes which will benefit the Conservative party. If the Government do not amend and tighten that definition, we shall certainly vote against the clause in Committee. What will happen to areas that the commission has already dealt with? Can they be revised in the light of clause 3 if a different pattern is urged?

Some of my hon. Friends rightly expressed concern about under-registration. It is clear that many people over the age of 18 are not on the electoral register. In my constituency, some people on the poll tax register who have paid their poll tax are not on the electoral register and they have every right to feel aggrieved. Not only is the electoral register out of date, but the figures that we shall soon have are also likely to be inaccurate because of the poll tax.

I warn the Government about the difficulties that will be caused for people who are pushed off the electoral register, sometimes through no fault of their own, and for people who have excluded themselves from the political process. The poll tax and those who supported it have much to answer for. It is extremely dangerous for the political process when more and more people——

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Darling: No, because the Minister is becoming restive—I promised him 20 minutes and he is already down to 19.

The Government should have regard to the fact that many people are not on the electoral register. If the boundary recommendations are to have any real meaning, the commission must have regard to proven under-registration. If it does not attend to that, the changes will be made on a false basis and people will be excluded from the process. No Government can ignore that.

The remarks by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) about efforts to get people on the register should be taken on board. There has been a complete lack of television advertising on that matter. When the Government propose to privatise public assets, a great deal is spent telling people about the opportunities which may arise to acquire shares at knockdown prices. The same effort should be put into urging people to put their names on the electoral register. Perhaps we could hear more about that because, so far, the Government's efforts have been lamentable.

We shall not divide the House on the principles of the Bill, but many aspects of the workings of the Bill and of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, to which we shall return when we deal with the matter in Committee, are causing concern. We shall divide the House on those matters because we strongly believe that the Government are simply letting matters drift and are not attending to real and substantial issues which should worry anyone interested in parliamentary democracy.

9.43 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): As my time is even shorter than I expected, I shall start by picking out the highlights of the debate and saying how much the House enjoyed the two maiden speeches. My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) paid a well-merited tribute to his predecessor, Sir Anthony Meyer, who is well remembered with great regard for his strong and sincere conviction which, when he felt it necessary, brought him into high-profile collision with his party. I dare say that the Whips are wondering how far my hon. Friend will follow his predecessor's example. Plainly, he can speak well and has an attractive constituency and a strong grasp of local issues. The House looks forward to hearing him again.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) also made an excellent maiden speech. He, too, paid a well-earned tribute to his predecessor, Hal Miller, who was well liked and listened to in the House, and it became plain from my hon. Friend's speech that that was the position in Bromsgrove, too. Hal Miller was an authority on the motor industry, in which he now holds a key position. He spoke on it with great effect. His successor, my hon. Friend, also spoke with great authority as befits a former chairman of the Association of District Councils and leader of Bournemouth city council. The House will look forward to hearing from him again.

I have listened to all but half an hour of the debate. Alas, I missed the remarks of my hon. Friends the Members for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) and for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett). I missed also the speech of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), who I know takes a thoughtful and constructive interest in these matters. I shall read the speeches of my hon. Friends and the hon. Gentleman, with profit no doubt, in *Hansard*.

Some strongly held views have been expressed during the debate. That is not surprising, as every hon. Member has a direct and personal interest in any measure that might affect the size and shape, if not the very existence, of his or her constituency at the next general election. The point was well made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones).

Similarly, it is not surprising that the debate has ranged widely and at times has been more concerned with what is not in the Bill than with what is, but it has been sensible and constructive throughout.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said, the scope of the Bill is modest and confined. It has only five clauses, two of which deal with the title and financial provisions.

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

The other three clauses do four main things. First, they require the current boundary commissions to report by the end of 1994, nearly 12 years after the commissions last reported in 1983.

Secondly, the shortened time scale will be aplied to future reviews. There is the requirement to report not sooner than eight years and not later than 12 years, compared with the present minimum of 10 years and maximum of 15 years. It is plain, as my right hon. and learned Friend said, and as many of my hon. Friends reiterated and amplified during the debate, that 15 years is too long if constituencies are to be kept at a reasonably equal size.

In England, constituency sizes range from 42,000 electors to more than 90,000. In Wales they range from 32,000 to more than 70,000 and in Scotland from 23,000 to 78,000. These ranges are not acceptable, although they are not surprising, as the boundaries on which the registers were based were, in England and Wales, those in force in 1976, 16 years ago, since when many millions have moved home. We have a geographically mobile society and registers that are so out of date are not a proper basis for the current distribution of constituencies.

It has been a welcome feature of the debate that Opposition Members have not sought to argue that the 1976 registers are an adequate basis for constituency boundaries for the next election, even though some fear that the likely reduction in the number of seats in the old urban areas from which voters have moved and the likely increase in the number of seats in the shire counties which have seen growth in population may not be to their party's advantage. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was wise to say that no one should make any hard and fast assumptions of gain and loss as a result of the changes in any election to come.

Several hon. Members on both sides of the House want to change the rules under which the boundary commissions operate. The commissions must have regard to the balance of population, social and geographical considerations and the significance of county and, particularly, London borough boundaries. There may or may not be a case for examining these matters and other aspects of the rules, although I must say that they have served well to date. Many people are disappointed by boundary commission proposals, but few argue with any persuasive conviction that they are partisan or unreasonable, or that it is not possible to make effective representations on provisional proposals and, often, to get them changed.

I assure the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) that the timetable and the additional resources that are being made available are intended to allow representations to be made, to be heard and to be acted upon.

Although there may be a case for reconsidering some of the rules, now is certainly not the time to do so. If we were to change them in this round, the English Boundary Commission, which began work last year under the current rules and which has already reported on more than one third of the English counties, would have to start again under the new rules. That would also be so for the Scottish Boundary Commission, which started work at the beginning of this year. That would effectively mean no boundary changes before 1997-98—an eventuality which might be devoutly wished by some Labour Members. Nevertheless, we shall carefully consider the serious suggestions for rule changes made during the debate, or which might be made in the House or elsewhere at a later stage. I would not rule out putting any of those suggestions into effect for the next round of reviews, especially if they should commend themselves across the political spectrum.

Rather more insistently, many Labour Members—notably the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes)—complained that the 1991 register, which is the reference point for the English, Scottish and Welsh boundary commissions, is insufficiently accurate to form an acceptable base for redistribution. I have some sympathy with that view. Just as I believe that constituency boundaries should not be allowed to become too out of date, so I believe that registers should be as up to date and as complete as possible.

From the estimates available, it appears that the 1976 register, which formed the basis for the last reorganisation in England and Wales, contained 97 per cent. of the eligible population and that by 1991 that figure had fallen to 95·5 per cent. We shall know better whether there has been such a fall when the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys has completed its work later this year. We may find that there has been no such fall or that any fall has been larger than estimated, but we shall discuss with local authorities and interested organisations, including political parties, how to ensure the maximum practical accuracy of registers.

In so far as that is the objective of Labour Members, there is no difference between us, but I do not accept the claim of some of them that the 1991 shortfall is wholly the result of the community charge and that it all works to the disadvantage of the Labour party. The timing of the estimated falls in proportions registered in England, Scotland and Wales does not bear out the proposition that the community charge was the only factor—and it does not necessarily demonstrate that it was the key factor. Although I accept that people sought to evade community charge payment by staying off the register, some electoral registration officers—notably in Leeds—used the community charge registers to improve the accuracy of their electoral registers.

Whatever the net effect of the community charge on registrations—and if I may confront the issue of raw party political advantage that lies below the surface and which, in parts of the debate, occasionally appeared above it—I suspect that the use of the 1991 register, with its estimated 95·5 per cent. accuracy in England and Wales and its 96·5 per cent. accuracy in Scotland, will be more favourable to the Labour party than anything more accurate or up to date. I say that quite simply because there is movement out of old urban areas—the old Labour heartlands—and that very process means that by the February, when a register comes into effect, a proportion of those on it will by then have moved away. That will have been compounded in some places where the practice has been to leave names on the register for a year or two, even though those people have not returned the registration form.

At any one time, therefore, areas that are losing population will have registers that tend to overstate the current number of electors. Contrarywise, those areas where the population is growing will always have registers that understate their adult eligible population. During the general election campaign, my hon. Friends with

expanding constituencies will have been faced with frustrated citizens, newly moved to their area and not on the electoral register, who were angry that they were unable to vote. After the last reorganisation, many of my hon. Friends will have had the experience that, by the time their new boundaries came into effect, their electorate was again well above the quota.

As the English and Scottish commissioners have already started work on the basis of the 1991 register, it will not be practicable for the Government to accept an amendment on that point. That, I know, will be deeply disappointing to those of my hon. Friends who see great advantage in basing reorganisation on more fully accurate and up-to-date registers. For that same reason, if Opposition Members think carefully about it, they ought to be somewhat relieved that there is no question of changing the rules at this stage and opting for a later and more complete register. They have argued strenuously that they want a register that better reflects the number of eligible residents in each constituency. If I were to say that I could see a way of obliging them, I am certain that they would begin to have some doubts about a move in that direction being provided for in this Bill.

I said that there were four elements in the Bill. I have dealt with two of them. I intend not to deal with the others so that I can refer to points that were made in the debate. As I have already implied, the constructive approach of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central is welcome. Both are concerned about clause 3, in particular about the way that the commissions would be able to take into account local government boundary changes not yet in force when making their provisional recommendations. That is a Committee point, but I ought to emphasise that, apart from Wales, the commission can have regard in its final proposals only to boundaries in force at the time that it makes its report. The flexibility in the Bill is designed to ensure that boundaries are as up to date as possible. I shall check the clarity and scope of the wording and see that it is helpful rather than confusing. I believe that it will be found to be extremely helpful.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) is concerned about the steadily growing size of the House. There were 625 Members in 1950. There are 651 Members in 1992. I know that the Select Committee discussed this matter some years ago. Its proposed solution—a fixed divisor—would, I believe, result in some real problems, but the issue needs to be tackled. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and his party may be prepared to discuss it seriously at some stage. The right hon. Gentleman has already offered to discuss seriously detailed reforms that might be made to the constitutional arrangements.

As for bringing the average size of electorates in English constituencies and those in Wales and Scotland into line, the differences are of very long standing and have wide implications for the structure and constitution of the United Kingdom, which should not be confused with the contents of this limited and practical Bill. The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) dealt very well with the complexities of any consideration of this issue from the perspective of Northern Ireland. I believe that some of my hon. Friends could usefully read what he said.

This is a small but important Bill. It naturally evokes interest from every hon. Member. It will make our constituencies more equal—which, judging from the debate, is in the interests of all hon. Members. Nobody argued against the Bill, so I hope that we shall have the united support of the House for giving it a Second Reading.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 290, Noes 44.

Division No. 31] **[10 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*

Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Bennett, Andrew F.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Clapham, Michael
Cryer, Bob
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Gordon, Mildred
Hall, Mike
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Heppell, John
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCartney, Ian
Maclennan, Robert
Mahon, Alice
Milburn, Alan
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Skinner, Dennis
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Alton and
Mr. David Winnick.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Boswell.]*

Committee tomorrow.

Boundary Commissions Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—
Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Boundary Commission Bill ("the Act") it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

10.13 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It is, of course, an important means of holding the Government to account to use the 45 minutes allocated to money resolutions. Although it is not a widespread activity, it is important.

Under the terms of the money resolution, £1·5 million is allocated to the legislation. That is a significant sum of money. The Home Secretary should explain how the money is to be allocated.

Under the heading "Financial Effects of the Bill", we read the total cost of the Bill spread over three years. Under the heading "Effect of the Bill on Public Service Manpower", we find that 15 additional extra staff will be required. So clearly, some of the money will be allocated to employing extra staff. Yet there are more important priorities to which extra civil service staff should be allocated. I have received complaints about the long delays in dealing with applications for mobility allowance and attendance allowance. I should have thought that, rather than speeding the passage and application of the Bill, the £1·5 million could be spent in better ways.

Perhaps the Secretary of State will outline whether any provision has been made for assistance to local authorities either to update registers or to provide information to the boundary commission. When the boundary commission sits and seeks information, local authorities have an obligation to provide papers. Of course, that is a cost on the local authority. Local authorities are extremely short of money at present. I wonder whether the Government have allocated any part of the £1·5 million for that purpose.

It would have been far and away better to allocate the £1·5 million, or a proportion of it, to a Speaker's Conference. It would have been much cheaper to consult all the parties than to rush ahead with the £1·5 million to facilitate what is widely regarded outside as gerrymandering.

I recall the amount of money that was spent in 1983. The Secretary of State must recognise that the money resolution makes provision for any expenditure that is consequential on the passage of the Bill. The Bill will be put into effect by a large number of orders. I wonder whether the £1·5 million covers consultation on the orders and their printing and distribution. There will be one order for each new constituency. That is 651 orders. Will that cost be covered by the £1·5 million or is that an ordinary cost borne by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in any event?

Before the Minister starts uttering high-flown platitudes about objectivity and improving democracy and says that the cost is small in relation to the cost of improving democracy, let me remind him of what happened in 1983. That impinges on the cost. When the orders went before the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, the Tory Whips told all the Tories on the Committee that they should not dare to vote against the orders but merely to seek information from the relevant Department. The Committee is supposed to be one of the famed, impartial, objective Committees of the House. It is bound to seek information if it is to make a report to the House. The Tory Whips told the Tory members of that impartial Committee, "There will be no overseas trips for any of you lot." That is what happened.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Ridiculous.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Gentleman says that that is ridiculous. The Secretary of State has said from the Dispatch Box that the Bill has nothing to do with party advantage and that it is some sort of democratic improvement.

Mr. Vivian Bendall (Ilford, North): Prove it.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Member for Ilford, North (Mr. Bendall) is shouting from outside the Chamber in a crude and inaccurate way and also illegally, because he is not supposed to speak from there. I seek to cut through all the platitudes and rhetoric. We know that £1·5 million is being spent to give the Tories the maximum electoral advantage. The support given to the Bill by Tory Members suggests that that is absolutely true. We have now pushed aside the tissue of hypocrisy woven by Ministers; we are now down to the nitty-gritty. An amendment should be tabled in Committee, proposing the inclusion of the £1·5 million in Tory candidates' election expenses. That should disqualify the lot of them.

10.20 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): That speech was delivered with great passion, but most of it had little to do with the money resolution. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) greatly cheered the majority who voted for the Bill by assuring us that it would add to the number of Conservative seats in the next Parliament, but that proposition was denied even by those on his party's Front Bench; that is why our majority was so large.

Half a million pounds a year is required to finance the payment of the deputy commissioners, 15 additional staff and some computer equipment. It plainly would not have made sense for the House to give a Second Reading to such a straightforward, almost uncontroversial Bill passed by such a huge majority, and then deny it a money resolution. As ever, the hon. Member for Bradford, South is paddling his own canoe, but he is paddling it fairly purposelessly this evening.

Question put,

The House divided: Ayes 369, Noes 26.

Division No. 32] **[10.20 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*	Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Aitken, Jonathan	Baldry, Tony
Alexander, Richard	Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*	Bates, Michael
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*	Batiste, Spencer
Amess, David	Bendall, Vivian
Ancram, Michael	Beresford, Sir Paul
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Biffen, Rt Hon John
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*	Blackburn, Dr John G.
Ashby, David	Body, Sir Richard
Aspinwall, Jack	Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*	Booth, Hartley
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*	Boswell, Tim
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*

Bowden, Andrew
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Opponheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

NOES

Alton, David
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Gordon, Mildred
Hall, Mike
Heppell, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hutton, John
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCartney, Ian
Mahon, Alice
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Skinner, Dennis
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Boundary Commissions Bill ("the Act") it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): With permission, I shall put together the first three motions relating to Statutory Instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

LEGAL AID AND ADVICE (SCOTLAND)

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 13th May, be approved.

That the draft Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 13th May, be approved.

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Assistance by Way of Representation) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 13th May, be approved.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

NATIONAL CURRICULUM

That the draft Education (National Curriculum) (Foundation Subjects at Key Stage 4) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 28th February, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Question agreed to.

Student Unions

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

10.32 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): I am pleased to have the Adjournment debate but I am a little surprised, if not dismayed, that it is necessary at all, because I remember urging the Government to abolish the student union closed shop in a debate in March 1988. A number of my hon. Friends spoke in that debate, including my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), who is also present tonight. At that time, an early-day motion calling for its abolition attracted more than 200 signatures.

Since that debate, Education Ministers have expressed support for the abolition of that closed shop, but nothing has been done. I believe that the time for action has now arrived. I therefore welcome my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education to the Front Bench in the expectation that he will be the man who grasps the nettle.

It should be noted how many of my hon. Friends are in the Chamber to hear this debate. They may have come to listen to the brilliant oratory of my hon. Friend the Minister, or even to hear my brilliant oratory, but that is unlikely. It is probably because of the strength of feeling within the Conservative party, which is also reflected outside the party.

The student unions closed shop is the last great remaining closed shop in this country. Every individual who wishes to study at university, polytechnic or college must belong to the student union of the institution which he or she chooses. It is indefensible that there is no choice. In eastern Europe, the compulsory, communist state-run student organisations are being closed down and replaced by independent student unions organised on a voluntary basis. Ironically, Britain is being left behind in that matter.

The Government must now give students the freedom to choose for themselves whether they wish to belong to student unions and the National Union of Students. It is simply a question of choice. The Government have extended choice to millions of our citizens in a whole host of ways, not least by effectively abolishing the trade union closed shop. The abolition of the student unions closed shop would therefore fit in perfectly with the Government's philosophy.

I warmly welcome yesterday's report in *The Sunday Times*, which suggests that the Government intend to make membership of the NUS voluntary. However, that would tackle only half the problem because, in practice, there is a double closed shop. At present, all students belong to their individual institution's student union and 97 per cent. of all student unions are affiliated to the NUS, which means that most students are automatically members of the NUS.

I read in this morning's *Daily Mail* that the current NUS president, Mr. Stephen Twigg, said that the vast majority of students are in the NUS by choice. That is laughable and suggests that the NUS is well out of touch with ordinary students. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to take on board the fact that the double closed shop can be abolished only by making membership of each student union voluntary.

[Mr. Graham Riddick]

Examples of abuse by the NUS and individual student unions are innumerable and give impetus to the case for reform. Lancaster University Conservative Association was recently fined £400 for having the temerity to suggest that the student union should be radically reformed to benefit all students, not just groups peddling minority issues.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): The vast majority of students at Lancaster university are thoroughly sound and sensible. They go on to get excellent jobs, and the university is one of the finest in the country. There is just a small core of left wingers who have taken over the union, often standing as independents, which they are not. The vast majority of students would welcome affiliation and voluntary membership.

Mr. Riddick: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who brings considerable knowledge to the debate. That example proves that a small number of left-wing activists give students as a whole a bad name.

Universities, including Nottingham and Bath, have banned Nestlé products due to Nestlé's alleged practices concerning baby milk in the third world. In 1990, the Polytechnic South-West sabbatical officers and other union executive members expressed support for the IRA, both in the students' magazine and at a meeting. It is fair to say that, over the years, the NUS's position on terrorism has given succour and comfort to the IRA because of its unwillingness to condemn the IRA outright.

When Nicaragua had a left-wing Government—there are not many of them left—many student unions insisted that only Nicaraguan coffee should be offered in their cafeterias. Not only did this deny students choice, but the coffee tasted lousy.

There are several hundred student sabbatical officers —in effect, a taxpayer-funded army of political activists, predominantly of the left. A vice-president of the Oxford university students union who attended a recent conference in Blackpool was quoted in his student newspaper as saying:

"There is no future for the NUS, it has had its day. The delegates were like little kids, idiots."

The Labour party's relationship with the NUS is worth examining. Let me give the House an example. Tom Franklin, a Labour party official, gave instructions to the Labour-controlled NUS on how to organise the emergency conference last March. He asked the NUS to get pro-Labour student unions to send delegates who would support the official NUS line. He said:

"Ask them how they are going to elect the Delegation; remind them that it doesn't have to be by cross-Campus Ballot."

So much for Labour's new-found interest in ballots based on one man, one vote.

The secretary of the National Organisation of Labour Students defended the Labour party and said:

"There is nothing wrong with this. Tom and I worked closely with the NEC of the NUS. We help them get elected. We expect them to do something in return for us."

The NUS tried to deliver for the Labour party by targeting 70 marginal Labour seats during the general election campaign. It would appear that the Labour party has been manipulating the NUS for its own political ends.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that the real corruption of student unions comes from the fact that the number required for a quorum is extremely small? In a students union society down the road, where there are 6,000 or 7,000 students, it is only 50. That is how they get through all sorts of unwanted, undesirable and wrong resolutions and other motions.

Mr. Riddick: What my hon. Friend says is true, and it shows that this whole situation is rotten to the core and ready for reform. In the past, we have been told that reform of campus student unions has not been forthcoming because of the difficulties and complexities involved. I have no doubt that these could be overcome. We should not allow an unholy alliance of vice-chancellors and the institutions they represent, officials at the Department of Education and the NUS to thwart reform.

Only today, I learned that Bradford university does not allow students to be registered to use the library unless they can produce NUS membership cards on registering. This is a disgrace. I hope that the university, which is in my region of West Yorkshire, will reverse that practice immediately.

At that moment, money for student union membership is passed directly as a block grant from the local education authorities to the institutions and then on to the student unions. The student never sees his contribution, and often is not even aware that his money has been passed over to the student union. This is not the way to encourage accountability. Each union has a guaranteed income without the need to attract a customer for its services.

The services that student unions offer could be organised in a number of ways. Part of the money that goes directly to the unions should be passed to students so that they could chose for themselves which societies to join, and whether they join the student union. That maximises choice. That is what it is all about.

The rest of the money should be handed to the universities and colleges, which in turn should be responsible for the provision and funding of welfare and sports activities. Other facilities, such as bars, shops and cafeterias, should be run on a commercial basis. That might involve franchising or contracting out the provision of the services. Some universities might want to set up a campus enterprise board to administer them.

Student magazines and newspapers could also be run commercially. I do not believe that there is any need to set out a tight prescriptive formula on how all these services should be provided. Each institution should have a great deal of flexibility, as long as the scope for abuse is minimised.

I am convinced that it is not beyond the wit of man to find an alternative way of providing and financing the services that student unions operate, at the same time as introducing voluntary membership of those unions.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Does my hon. Friend agree that this debate is not about banning student unions or the NUS? If they provide the services that students wanted, the students will voluntarily use their funds to join them—but at the moment they have no choice.

Mr. Riddick: That is a powerful point. We are talking about choice. We simply want to allow students to make up their own minds on how money is spent and on what is done in their name. If the NUS is such a fine organistion

—that is questionable—it will have no difficulty in attracting thousands of students to join it. That goes for the student unions too.

Politicised student unions misusing public money have had their day. On 12 November last year, a *Times* leader thundered:

"A new statute is needed to enshrine the voluntary principal in British student representations, difficult as the Government has found that in the past, but a worthy task for the next Parliament."

We are the next Parliament——

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): My hon. Friend has so far not mentioned the UN declaration on human rights, which is highly relevant and all about the right to associate or not to associate. We must give students that human right, just as we have given it to other union members over the past few years.

Mr. Riddick: I am pleased that I gave way; my hon. Friend has added a new dimension to the debate.

It is significant that so many hon. Members are here in the House late at night to listen to an Adjournment debate. Such debates are not usually well attended—a Member is luckly if more than four others turn up. That shows the depth of feeling——

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Among Conservative Members at least.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central) *rose*——

Mr. Riddick: I cannot give way to the hon. Gentleman, because I do not have enough time.

Mr. Caborn: Give way!

Mr. Riddick: The hon. Gentleman knows that I have only half an hour——

Mr. Caborn: *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Gentleman knows quite well that if the hon. Member who has the Floor, especially in an Adjournment debate, does not give way, he must resume his seat.

Mr. Riddick: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. If I had more time, I would happily give way, but I am coming to the end of my speech, and I want to encourage one of my hon. Friends to speak as well.

A poll carried out in February 1990 showed that more than 80 per cent. of students believed that students should have the right to join or not to join their student union. I agree. Here is a chance to strike a major blow for choice and freedom. The time is ripe, and I hope that the Minister will grasp this opportunity.

10.49 pm

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I had not intended to speak in this short debate, on which I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick). However, I was intrigued by a statement attributed to a Ms. Laura Matthews, a spokeswomen for the National Union of Students, who, according to a report in a newspaper today, said:

"We are not a closed shop because students choose to belong to the union."

That is not the case at all. People choose to become students, but they must not automatically be obliged to belong to a closed shop students union. The Conservative Government have abolished vested interests and monopoly power at all levels in the trade unions and local government, and I abolished the Inner London education authority. This issue is a raw nerve for the Opposition parties, which have behaved so badly in the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley should be congratulated by the House on his determination in putting his case. I hope for a good reply from the Minister.

10.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Nigel Forman): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) for drawing this important subject to the attention of the House and for putting his case in such a characteristically forceful way. I congratulate my hon. Friend on his pulling power in such debates. I am also grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans), for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) and for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) for their supportive speeches.

I am glad to have this opportunity to debate the issues. I have listened carefully to the debate and assure my hon. Friends that I take the matter seriously. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education has also shared with me his deep concern about the issues of personal freedom that are involved. As my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley rightly said, this is simply a question of choice.

As the House knows, we have already taken action to deal with the abuses of freedom of speech and the misuse of public funds. Under the Education Act 1986, institutions must take steps to ensure freedom of speech within the law, and must establish codes of practice for this purpose. Students who feel that there is a bias or discrimination against a student society or individual may appeal to their institutions for redress. However, the National Union of Students is not subject ot the same obligations and is stil able to urge its members to adopt "no platform" policies. I deplore that and I intend to consider it very carefully.

We have also acted on the use of public funds. The Attorney-General issued guidance in 1983 which provides detailed information on how campus unions with charitable status may use public funds. His office is able to intervene where there is a possibility that these guidelines will be breached. There have also been instances when irregular expenditure has been successfully challenged in the courts.

Although those measures have proved beneficial in cutting the scale of abuse, there have been continuing expressions of concern. My hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley gave further examples. That is why my predecessor—my hon. Friend, the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth)—initiated consultations on student union matters with representatives of student interests and higher education institutions throughout the United Kingdom.

The issues raised in the consultation covered three main points: first, whether membership of campus unions, and hence indirectly association with the NUS, should remain compulsory; secondly, how freedom of speech on campuses can be guaranteed; and thirdly, how the proper

[Mr. Nigel Forman]

use of public funds by campus unions and the NUS can be ensured. These are not simple issues, and that is why the Government are taking time to consider them thoroughly.

In essence, there is here a conflict of principles. At present, students have no choice over whether to join their campus union. It is almost impossible for them to leave the union if they do not agree with its actions. That contravenes a basis democratic principle, that membership of such organisations should be voluntary. I have great sympathy with students who do not wish to belong to an organisation which they feel does not represent their views.

In other words, there are ways in which campus unions are a form of closed shop, as my right hon. Friend said over the weekend. However, there are differences as well. Campus unions are not pre-entry closed shops in the usual sense of the term. Unlike a trade union closed shop, a campus union exercises no control over which students may join the educational institution concerned, although anyone joining the educational institution is automatically made a member of the campus union. Membership of the NUS, too, differs from a closed shop arrangement, in that campus unions vote on whether or not to affiliate.

Herein lies the difficulty. I share the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley that full-time and sandwich students have no choice over whether to join the union.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Will the Minister confirm that there is one other major difference between a closed shop in a trade union and membership of a student union, which is that membership of a student union imposes no obligation or loss of rights on individuals? It merely gives them rights that they are free to exercise or not in terms of the use of services.

Mr. Forman: I cannot accept that argument. The voluntary principle is not preserved when students are automatically joined to the campus union. Even though they have the possibility of voting technically to affiliate subsequently through their campus unions to the NUS, the initial decision to be in the campus union is not for them. That was the central point to which my hon. Friend was speaking.

On the other hand, in a free society it is of course reasonable for students to have a body which can represent their interests. The principle of freedom of association would suggest that students should have the right to join together to form an organisation to undertake the functions they feel necessary to meet their legitimate needs. The difficulties arise when a small minority of politically motivated students use campus unions as a platform for their opinions and exploit compulsory membership for their own ends.

The use of public funds is another factor to be considered. The campus unions and the NUS are private associations, yet their funds originate largely from the public purse. I say "largely" because private funds are also involved. As my hon. Friend knows, and as he said, the campus unions are funded by block grant from their parent institutions. The funds out of which the institutions pay grant comes from a variety of sources. They come from the public purse in the form of funding council grant and tuition fees paid on students' behalf by local education authorities. The institutions also receive public funds in the form of research council grants.

But their income also derives in part from private sources: industrial research contracts, for example, fees paid by self-financing students and endowments. The campus unions add to the grant they receive from the institutions' funds that they raise on their own account —bar profits, for example. The inclusion of money from public sources in the funds which the campus unions use, and out of which they pay for NUS affiliation, should impose a due restraint upon them and their actions, but it does not seem to have done so. That is another factor which I shall weigh in my consideration of the issues.

There are also practical considerations. Campus unions supply some useful student services at relatively low costs, such as catering, welfare and sporting facilities. We could not consider action in relation to student unions without considering how these services might otherwise be maintained for the benefit of all students. I listened carefully to my hon. Friend's interesting suggestions on alternative ways in which services might be provided.

The consultations initiated by my predecessor are continuing. I plan to bring them to a close in the near future by having a final round of discussions with higher education institutions and others with an interest in the matter.

Mr. Pawsey: My hon. Friend has said that the consultation period has been somewhat protracted. Is he able to advise the House when he expects to bring forward some firm proposals?

I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the fact that there are no fewer than 31 Conservative Members in their places for this important debate. I ask him to contrast that presence with the number of Opposition Members who are in the Chamber.

Mr. Forman: I am impressed by the support that is gathered on the Government Benches. Arguments have been advanced with characteristic forcefulness by my hon. Friends.

I believe that proposals can be brought forward in good time. I cannot be more precise than that at the moment. My hon. Friend will appreciate that the complexity of some of the issues is considerable.

In the light of these discussions, I should be able to reach conclusions, although I am not yet in a position to tell the House what those conclusions will be. My hon. Friends can rest assured that I shall take careful account of what has been said this evening. I shall be seeking to move in the direction of the voluntary principle, which is what has already been flagged by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 16 June 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time tomorrow.

RIVER HUMBER (UPPER PYEWIPE OUTFALL) BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time, and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

South Birmingham Health Authority

1. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what meetings she or officials from her Department have had with Sir James Ackers or other officials of West Midlands regional health authority in respect of the deficit faced by South Birmingham health authority.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): Officials from my Department have held a number of meetings with the West Midlands regional health authority to discuss this matter.

Mr. Burden: Is the Minister aware that news of the multi-million pound cash crisis facing South Birmingham health authority started to filter out at the end of February this year, but was hushed up until after the general election? Is he also aware that the report into the causes of the crisis has still not been published, but the people of Birmingham are faced with proposals to close hospitals such as the Royal Orthopaedic hospital, the Accident hospital and several others? Will the Minister intervene to ensure that the report into the causes of the crisis is made public straight away? Will he further intervene to ensure that all options are considered before decisions are taken and that the people of south Birmingham will not be forced to suffer hospital closures as a result of financial mismanagement or Government underfunding, or both?

Mr. Sackville: As the hon. Gentleman knows, as soon as the problem came to light, a report into its causes was commissioned from KPMG Peat, Marwick, McLintock. Extra money was allocated to the district to ensure continuity of service and also that all bills were being paid on time. Extra money is to be allocated over the next three years to ensure that the proposed action plan will come into effect smoothly and cause no disruption to service. The hon. Gentleman also knows that the report is a technical report to the region, which will have to decide whether and when it will be published.

Dame Jill Knight: Is my hon. Friend aware that his denial of the allegation of any hushing up will be warmly welcomed by those in the west midlands who know the true facts? Is he also aware that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) is mixing up two totally different issues? The first is the need to balance the books when there is underspending and the second is the BHB—Building a Healthy Birmingham plan—which is connected with the hospital closures that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. The two have nothing to do with each other.

Mr. Sackville: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. When Opposition Members see any change in the health service, they attack it. In the current case we are dealing with a £500 million capital investment plan to provide better and more modern hospital facilities for Opposition Members' constituents. That is what they are attacking.

Residential Homes

2. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has any proposals to change the current arrangements for the monitoring and inspection of private care or nursing homes.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tim Yeo): We have no plans to change the existing statutory arrangements. In England and Wales health authorities remain responsible for registration and inspection of independent nursing homes and local authorities for registration and inspection of care homes.

Mr. McAllion: Has the Minister read the recent report by the Royal College of Nursing, which reveals that the placement of elderly people in residential care has little or nothing to do with the level of care required or with the wishes of the old people themselves, and everything to do with keeping costs down and a lack of adequate available accommodation? The RCN also warned that the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, due to come into force next year, will do nothing to change a situation that it describes as a scandal waiting to happen. The Minister has been warned by those who should know. What does he intend to do about it?

Mr. Yeo: I wholly reject the second conclusion that the hon. Gentleman cited from the RCN report. We are confident that when the new arrangements come into effect next year, the process of assessment that everyone will undergo will ensure that an individually tailored care package appropriate to their needs will be available. Some people may be able to stay at home, some may go into residential homes and some may go into nursing homes. Whatever the appropriate solution is, it will be found.

Mr. Paice: My hon. Friend will be aware that monitoring homes costs money. Is he aware that county council authorities that have a relatively small number of private homes but a large number of social services departments find that they are penalised under the standard spending assessment arrangements? Cambridgeshire is a particular example. Will my hon. Friend undertake to consider that and to talk to my right

hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment about the composition of the SSA as it relates to care homes?

Mr. Yeo: Decisions about SSAs are taken by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, but my hon. Friend the Minister for Health is a Cambridgeshire Member and will take a close interest in the Cambridgeshire SSA for personal social services expenditure.

Community Care

3. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on progress on the implementation of community care.

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): We set out the timetable for implementing our community care reforms in 1990. Many of them have already been achieved. We are on course to achieve the remainder by April 1993.

Mr. Griffiths: How does the Minister reconcile that with the statement by the Institute of Health Services Management that the Government have inadequately planned and inadequately funded community care? Social services departments are being starved of the £134 million that they need for community care this year. How does the hon. Gentleman expect tens of thousands of carers to meet the needs of disabled relatives when the Government are doing so little?

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government are doing a considerable amount—indeed, we have just had the second round of reports from local authorities, and those reports show that the authorities are making steady progress towards implementing the arrangements that must be in place.

Mr. Griffiths: Not true.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is true. I am quoting from reports that we have just received. Funding will be considered within the public expenditure survey, and decisions on that have not yet been announced.

Mr. Sims: Will my hon. Friend confirm that it is his intention that the private sector should play an important role in community care? As he studies the community care plans submitted by local authorities, will he satisfy himself that the private sector has been involved in the preparation of those plans and that it will be involved in their implementation?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is right to point out the importance that we attach to giving people a clear choice in the homes to which they go. I also believe that the public generally attach some importance to having that choice. I assure my hon. Friend that, as we continue to progress towards the implementation of this important reform, we shall certainly bear in mind the point that he has made and will want to try to ensure that local authorities relate not only to the independent sector of provision but to health authorities, and GPs, because it is in the interests of everyone—primarily of users and their carers—that there should be a seamless robe as between the various statutory organisations.

Ms. Lynne: Does the Minister accept that, without adequate resources for community care, there will be a disaster in April? May we have a commitment today that those resources will be provided and that they will be ring-fenced?

Dr. Mawhinney: We have already made it clear a number of times that we shall ensure that the policy is adequately resourced, and I make the point to the hon. Lady again today. I understand her concern, but I hope that she will not be too keen to use words such as "disaster". This is an important policy, especially to people in the community who need opportunities for assessment. Many of them want to remain in their own homes, but thus far have not had the option to do so. We are not talking about disasters waiting to happen; we are committing all our efforts, with local authorities, to ensuring that the policy will be a real success.

Mrs. Currie: Is the Minister aware that there continues to be considerable concern about community care for mentally handicapped people? Will he take an interest in the activities of VOICE, an organisation set up by my constituents Mr. and Mrs. Boniface to campaign for better recruitment, training and monitoring of staff in small homes for the mentally handicapped following the recent tragic indecent assault on their daughter Nicole?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing my attention and that of the House to that important matter. I can certainly give her the assurance that she seeks.

Mr. Robin Cook: Will the Minister acknowledge that last month's survey by the Directorate of Social Services found wild variations in standards? Is he aware that among the 20 authorities with the worst records in the provision of home helps were Suffolk, represented by the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), Cambridgeshire, represented by himself, and, at the very bottom of the table, Surrey, represented by the Secretary of State? Would not it ease their joint embarrassment if Ministers were now to accept the advice of everyone else involved in community care that any extra money should be ring fenced so that those councils must spend it on raising their poor standards?

Dr. Mawhinney: I do not accept for one moment that the reports which we have just received show that there are "wild variations". Of the 108 local authorities that have reported, all bar one have their assessment plans in place. We shall work with them to develop those plans so that when they are managed with adequate resources we shall have a community care proposal and policy which will be welcomed by users and carers alike. I very much hope that before he leaves his present position—should that turn out to be the case—the hon. Gentleman will throw his weight behind the policy to try, as far as possible, to remove from it any partisan elements for the benefit of the frail and elderly in our community.

Patients Charter

4. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on progress in implementing the standards set out in the patients charter.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): Considerable progress has been made by the national health service in implementing the patients charter which came into effect on 1 April.

The public and NHS staff have given the patients charter a warm welcome. The NHS has achieved significant success in putting the patients charter into effect. The efforts of the NHS in responding to and implementing the charter should be recognised.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the excellence of the care available under the national health service has for far too long been blighted by scant regard for patients' ordinary comfort and convenience, especially in the administration of out-patients departments and investigations? Does not the introduction of the patients charter signal the end of off-hand, inefficient and uncaring bureaucracy?

Mrs. Bottomley: All agree that the clinical care provided by the national health service has almost invariably been outstanding, but there are times when patients have not felt that they were treated with the courtesy and concern that they would have wished. The provision of information, arrangements for making a complaint and a discussion about their care are all part of making a health service which is truly patient sensitive and patient centred. The NHS has taken the patients charter initiative to its heart and is now providing high-quality services across the country.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: Does the Secretary of State agree that the patients charter is virtually worthless if patients and staff in the nation's hospitals can be subject to violent and, in the case of one of my constituents, mortal attack by intruders? Does she further agree that an independent inquiry into funding and staffing levels for hospital security is long overdue, and will she take the necessary steps to set in train such an inquiry?

Mrs. Bottomley: Certainly, the case in the hon. Lady's constituency in which someone was fatally attacked on the third floor while using a telephone was appalling and outrageous. New guidance has been given for hospital security. Hospitals have a difficult balance to strike between being places to which visitors, families and staff can have easy access but at the same time places from which perpetrators of foul crimes can be removed. I understand that inquiries under way at the hospital in question have shown that there was adequate security. Of course, any further lessons will and must be learnt, and we must ensure that the guidance is properly applied throughout the service.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend pay tribute to the work of trust hospitals in helping to carry out the objectives of the patients charter? Is she aware that the Royal Free trust hospital, which has already been mentioned this afternoon, has been responsible for treating many more patients since it became a trust hospital? Should not that be welcomed instead of being criticised by Opposition Members?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend will be well aware of the habit very quickly acquired by Labour Members of being able to refer to hospitals in their constituencies only by talking about the adverse aspects and the problems that emerge. Conservative Members are very much more ready to identify the positive aspects and the work being taken forward, especially in NHS trust hospitals, to deliver the spirit of the patients charter.

Ms. Harman: The Secretary of State will be aware that the patients charter made very specific promises to patients. One of those promises was that no patient would have to wait for NHS treatment for more than two years. In the first month of the operation of the patients charter, 1,999 people have been waiting for more than two years.

Another promise made by the patients charter was that nobody would have to wait for an ambulance for more than 14 minutes in an urban area. Is the Secretary of State aware that in London in the first month of the operation of the patients charter, 10,000 people had to wait for more than 14 minutes for their accident and emergency ambulances to arrive? What does she say to all those to whom the Government made promises in the charters and for whom those promises are now broken?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Lady will be aware that we were deeply disappointed by the small increase in the number waiting for more than two years. The figure amounts to fewer than one patient per hospital throughout the country. The matter must be kept in proportion. Whereas there were 51,000 waiting for more than two years a year ago, the figure is now down to under 2,000.

Once again, the hon. Lady has taken no trouble to investigate what is happening in a hospital in her constituency. I understand that at King's College hospital, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of patients waiting for less than 30 minutes. The figure for those waiting for less than 30 minutes was 30 per cent. a year ago; it is now 60 per cent. and rising. Better patient information is produced and more is planned. There are improvements in the accident and emergency department; there are improvements in the out-patients' department; there are improvements in the numbers of patients whose appointments are not being cancelled. There are further projects to improve the intensive therapy facilities—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Has the right hon. Lady finished?

Mrs. Bottomley: There has been a great investment in new ambulances, in trained staff and in the communications service which is being modernised. Like the hon. Lady, I hope that the London ambulance service will continue to improve its standards and the care available to patients.

Dental Services

5. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure that patients in all parts of the country have access to NHS dental services.

12. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to assess the adequacy of the provision of the NHS dental services in all parts of the country.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are committed to an NHS dental service for the whole country. The Government have built up NHS dentistry; there are 27 per cent. more dentists than in 1979, and more than 7 million more courses of adult dental treatment are carried out every

year. In most parts of the country, NHS dental treatment is readily available. Where there are difficulties, family health services authorities may make use of long-standing arrangements to employ salaried dentists. As part of our determination to safeguard access to NHS dentistry, my Department wrote yesterday to all FHSAs reminding them of this option.

Mr. Hain: Surely the Secretary of State must accept that by increasing charges to patients and cutting fees to dentists, she is effectively privatising dental care, especially as many people cannot find an NHS dentist in their area. Instead of playing Mary Poppins, she has become the Cruella de Vil of the national health service.

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman should look again at the facts. Our proposals would result in a reduction in the charges to patients. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is aware that dentists on average should earn £35,800. It is proposed that they should keep a further £5,000 on top of that. More than £40,000 is a good salary from any professional standpoint. In addition, it is proposed that there should be an 11·6 per cent. increase in expenses. That is a good salary which should certainly safeguard NHS dental services.

Mrs. Mahon: Are not the Government increasingly pushing dentistry into the private sector through their policies? Is the right hon. Lady aware that one third of children have not been registered with a National Health Service dentist during the first six months of the new contract? What is she going to do about it? Is she not failing British children?

Mrs. Bottomley: On the contrary, there are 27 per cent. more dentists than in 1979; almost 30 million people have signed up for continuing care; and, there are about 7 million more adult courses of treatment than in 1979. The NHS dental service is effective. I hope that we can get over the present fee situation and work with dentists for a fundamental review of the way in which they are remunerated.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I recognise dentists' vital role within our national health service, but will my right hon. Friend tell the House that, were dentists allowed to keep the total remuneration that they receive, it would set a sad and dangerous precedent for other vital groups of NHS workers, not least doctors, nurses and paramedics? In an endeavour to bring the unfortunate dispute to an end, is she prepared to discuss with representatives of the dental profession their right to pick and choose their patients?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making a number of important points. Certainly, the increase in dentists' income recommended by the review body, at 8·5 per cent., was much higher than that recommended for nurses or doctors. I have to consider not only the interests of dentists, but those of patients and other NHS workers. I hope that the dentists will find their way through the present difficulties. Given present figures, a 23 per cent. fee reduction would be required to deliver that income of £38,500. We are proposing a 7 per cent. fee reduction only, which is sensible and fair. My hon. Friend made other points about the way in which dentists work, which are rightly and properly matters for the fundamental review. The Minister and I shall certainly be happy to see all interests concerned with the dentists on that review.

Mr. Sweeney: Does my right hon. Friend agree——

Several Hon. Members: Reading.

Madam Speaker: Order. Let us have a little tolerance in relation to new Members.

Mr. Sweeney: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the British Dental Association's withdrawal from the dental rates study group is an act of folly? Whatever the disagreements between the Government and the profession about fees, surely it is better for dentists to be fully represented in all negotiations over fees. If they disagree about the figures, is not the DRSG the correct way to discuss it—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman would do well with his question if he would sit down now and allow the Minister to answer.

Mrs. Bottomley: I agree with my hon. Friend, to the extent that the public will be confused if dentists fail to attend the dental rates study group with the independent chairman, because that is the setting in which detailed figures should be discussed and examined. For example, I have heard dentists refer to their expenses, but on each of the last three occasions that that issue was debated it turned out that they had been over rather than underestimated. This year an 11·6 per cent. increase in expenses is proposed. The profession should get back to the dental rates study group to discuss the details.

Mr. Robin Cook: Will the Secretary of State admit that the current dispute stems from the contract imposed by the Government only two years ago against the wishes of most dentists? If Ministers got their sums wrong then, why should dentists and their patients have to pay the price now? May I warn the Secretary of State that if, as a result of this dispute, more of our constituents are told by their dentists that they will have to go private, we shall not just hold her responsible for privatising the dental service but will suspect that the Government want such a privatised dental service?

Mrs. Bottomley: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman that the dispute results from the new contract. It is the result of the long-standing method by which we have remunerated dentists, which dates back nearly 40 years. It is time that we reviewed that system of remuneration, which is what the chairman of the review body suggested. We want to make progress on that review as soon as the dispute is settled. Of course, I am concerned about the needs of national health service patients. That is why I have reminded family health services authorities of their power to take on salaried dentists to safeguard the national health dental service. I hope that dentists will think long and hard before turning their backs on an average income, with expenses, of £88,000.

Patients Charter

6. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many requests her Department has received from members of the public for copies of the patients charter since its publication.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has had nearly 900,000 requests for copies of the patients charter.

Mr. Coombs: Does my hon. Friend agree that the patients charter not only gives rights to potential patients, but demands responsibilities from them? To that end, is he aware of the contents of the national fitness survey issued yesterday by the Health Education Authority, which not only showed that between seven and eight people out of every 10 in this country do not do enough exercise to keep themselves healthy, but that 80 per cent. of the population think that they are fit when they are not, including the parliamentary football team, as it displayed at lunch time? What action will the Government take to ensure that people understand the message, which is so important for good preventive health care?

Mr. Sackville: My hon. Friend clearly appears before us at the peak of physical fitness. However, having seen the results of the Lords and Commons tug-of-war match yesterday, I am afraid that I cannot apply that comment more generally. My hon. Friend is right to refer to the national fitness survey because it underlines the fact that the patients charter is a two-way street. It confers right on patients, but it also confers duties on them to try to keep themselves fit and healthy. We shall be making that message exceedingly clear.

Dr. Lynne Jones: In view of the Secretary of State's comments to a local paper in Birmingham that patient care must come first, does the Minister share my concern at the letter sent by the South Birmingham health authority to general practitioners telling them not to refer patients for psychological services? Is it not time that the full details of the financial crisis in South Birmingham were published so that the people of Birmingham can see the full effects of those financial difficulties on patient care?

Mr. Sackville: We have made it clear that we intend to take positive action to ensure no disruption in services as a result of the financial problems of the South Birmingham health authority. We have already commissioned a report and we have allocated extra funds to ensure that there is continuity of services.

Mr. Hayes: Does my hon. Friend agree that all those people who continually moan about the patients charter and national health service trusts should go and see them for themselves? They would find enthusiastic staff at all levels, more patients being treated and more money being spent on patient care. Will the Minister please give us more good news about the health service, because there is a hell of a lot of good news that we do not hear about?

Mr. Sackville: I echo my hon. Friend's remarks, and I stress that the patients charter has been extremely well received by NHS staff.

Mr. Miller: As one who has tested the services of the national health service recently in an attempt to obtain peak fitness, I suppose that I could make some remarks about the local health district, but I shall refrain from doing so. In the context of the patients charter, what success has been obtained in reducing waiting lists in neurology in the Mersey region? Will the Minister investigate what is going on and do something urgently about it?

Mr. Sackville: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman detailed information, but I will write to him.

Mr. Rowe: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be a lot easier to keep fit if one did not have to spend so much time answering letters from one's constituents? Does he further agree that the substantial postbags that all hon. Members receive contain a large number of letters from constituents quoting the patients charter and using it as a yardstick against which to measure local services, the charter having had a salutary effect right through the health service and being taken into account by every decision-maker in the NHS?

Mr. Sackville: I echo my hon. Friend's comments. The patients charter has not only provided a target for staff to strive for in the NHS but has informed patients of their rights, and that has had a salutary effect.

NHS Trusts

7. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many applications she has received for hospital trust status; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: One hundred and fifty one applications have so far been received from hospitals and other units in England to become operational from April 1993. That is higher than the number of applications in the first or second waves and is a tangible demonstration that staff and managers in the NHS are behind the Government's reforms.

Mrs. Ewing: Given the rise in the number of applications, does the Minister accept that one of the greatest concerns expressed by NHS employees appears to be the determination of trusts to write into their employees' contracts a gagging clause which prevents them from speaking out against or challenging bad practice? Given that a consultation process on the issue is in place, does the Minister accept that every NHS employee should have a legally protected right, preferably through independent channels, to speak out as appropriate to ensure the best level of practice, irrespective of the system?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am glad that the hon. Lady recognises the increasing popularity of trusts. She will be interested to know that about a third of NHS hospital and community health service capacity is now managed by trusts. From next April, that will become about two thirds.

The hon. Lady rightly points out that this is an important issue. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have taken it seriously and have made it clear that consultations are to take place with a view to issuing guidance. I hope that the hon. Lady will accept that that is a serious and considered response on a subject which has caused a certain amount of anxiety to a number of people, not least to the Royal College of Nursing.

Mr. Marland: Having reluctantly accepted our policy on the sale of council houses, our policy for moderate taxation and, more recently, our education reforms, how long will it be before the Labour party also endorses our policy on NHS reforms?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend makes his point effectively. There is already some evidence that Opposition Members are beginning to accept that our policies are

increasingly commanding support among patients and staff of the NHS. The change in attitude that my hon. Friend predicts, and which I agree will come, will be driven by Opposition Members' constituents.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Minister aware that his last comments were totally and utterly inaccurate? Is he further aware that if he represented an area such as mine, where a trust is already in severe financial difficulty—and where many elderly people are deeply concerned because of an application for a second trust to turn all the elderly and geriatric services into a trust—he would know that his moves are distorting the provision of health care, upsetting the staff, putting many jobs at risk and in general leading to a definite downgrading of health care throughout the NHS?

Dr. Mawhinney: No, I do not accept a word of what the hon. Lady has said because it does not accord with the facts and it certainly does not accord with the popularity of the policies. It is clear that the hon. Lady will be among the last Opposition Members prepared to shed their ideological prejudices.

Mr. Gale: My hon. Friend will be aware of the fact that Thanet district hospital has submitted an excellent application for trust status to enable it to attain full district hospital status and provide the 24 accident and emergency services and other acute services that my constituents require. Will my hon. Friend assure my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) and me that that trust status will be granted as soon as possible?

Dr. Mawhinney: I assure my hon. Friend that, after the consultation process has been followed through—as, statutorily, it must be—my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I will give serious consideration to the application.

Respite Care

8. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the level of respite care available within the NHS.

Mr. Yeo: We are looking to health, as well as local authorities, further to develop respite care services as part of the implementation of the White Paper, "Caring for People". We recognise the contribution which such services can make to providing practical support for carers.

Mr. Byers: Has the Minister had an opportunity yet to consider the recent survey carried out by the Carers National Association? Is he aware of the main findings of that survey, which are that no less than 20 per cent. of carers had no break for even a day from their caring responsibilities and that no less than two thirds of carers suffered ill health in discharging their caring obligations? In the light of those disturbing findings, will the Government take urgent steps to provide comprehensive respite care within the national health service, or is the Minister content to continue present Government policies which are clearly based on cynical exploitation of the compassion of those who care for others?

Mr. Yeo: I am aware of the survey. Because of our concern about the position of carers, we have identified as the key objectives in our White Paper, "Caring for People", first, to promote the development of respite services and, secondly, to ensure that the service providers make practical support for carers a high priority. Respite care is available in hospitals, nursing homes and people's own homes through better domiciliary services. The number of short-stay residents in care homes is double the 1979 level.

Sir John Hannam: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the benefits given to carers have risen from some £4 million in the last year of the Labour Government in 1978 to more than £213 million this year? Is that not evidence of the importance that the Government place on the role of carers in the forthcoming programme for care in the community?

Mr. Yeo: My hon. Friend, who is known for his expertise in the matter, is absolutely right. That level is likely to continue rising. It shows, in a practical way, exactly how the Government are determined to give carers the support that they need.

Elderly People

9. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to develop alternatives to the institutional care of elderly people.

Mr. Yeo: We are taking forward a wide range of measures to encourage the development and co-ordination of health and social services for elderly people, and to promote choice and independence.

Mr. Bradley: I invite the Minister—or, preferably, the Secretary of State—to visit my constituency to see at first hand the high-quality alternative provision by Manchester city council. The elderly persons' resource centre, known as the Minehead centre, is a model which should be replicated throughout the country. It provides services for people in their homes and in the centre, co-ordinated by social services and the health authority. Since its opening, there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of elderly people seeking residential care in its catchment area. If the Government would make capital money available to local authorities, such centres could be opened throughout the country. Will the Minister visit the centre to see for himself what can be achieved by proper local authority provision?

Mr. Yeo: I welcome the fact that the hon. Gentleman, unlike so many of his colleagues, has chosen to highlight some good practices. There are other good things happening in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. The community health services have had a care team working with general practices and social services to maintain elderly people in their own homes, there is a new proposal for a hospital at home scheme to enable a number of elderly people to be rehabilitated in their homes, and the community care plan for elderly people in the district has been produced jointly by the health and social services and the voluntary sector. Those provisions reflect the additional help that we are giving in the community. Nationally, there are 37 per cent. more day places, 28 per cent. more home helps, 12 per cent. more meals on wheels and 19 per cent. more community nurses. Those are all Government achievements since 1979.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my hon. Friend agree that the provision of care for the elderly through the private sector has developed some homely accommodation? Does he welcome Dorset Care Association's publication of a document giving a charter for the care of people in their homes, to be launched at the beginning of July?

Mr. Yeo: I certainly welcome that charter, a copy of which has been sent to us. My hon. Friend is absolutely right to identify the innovative work carried out by the private sector. It is because we want to see that work extended that we have invited local authorities to bid for £6 million to develop over the next three years more innovative schemes, particularly involving the private and voluntary sectors, to improve the range and responsiveness of day and domiciliary services so that more elderly people and others can stay in their own homes.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 June.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Hughes: Given the commitment that the Prime Minister gave to the biodiversity treaty in Rio over the weekend and in the House yesterday, while he advises other countries on how to solve their problems, will he try to solve some of the problems that we have in this country? Thorne and Hatfield moors in my constituency have been totally devastated by the peat extraction carried out by the Fisons company. Will the Prime Minister introduce legislation to stop the devastation of sites of special scientific interest, not just at Thorne and Hatfield moors, but throughout the country?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows that there is stringent legislation to deal with sites of special scientific interest. I am not familiar with the case raised by the hon. Gentleman, but if he will let me have the details I undertake to ensure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment examines the matter.

Q2. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Field: Is my right hon. Friend aware that during the general election campaign the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food visited the Isle of Wight, where he reacted to the policy of the Liberal Democrats to make the island a trial district for rabies vaccination? Will my right hon. Friend congratulate his Cabinet colleague on defeating the suggestion from Brussels that we should weaken our safeguards against rabies in pets, and for keeping mad dogs out of our country and the even madder leader of the Liberal Democrats out of power? Will my right hon. Friend give the House an assurance that the Government will continue to maintain controls against both those terrible diseases?

The Prime Minister: I think that my hon. Friend strikes a chord both with the House and with the country as a whole. I believe that yesterday's agreement of the Agriculture Council provides fully effective protection against rabies, and as such I think that it will be widely welcomed throughout the country.

Mr. Hattersley: Now that the Prime Minister has agreed to Mr. Delors' reappointment, will he describe—principally for the benefit of his Back Benchers—the qualities in the President of the Commission which inspired the Prime Minister's confidence?

The Prime Minister: As ever, the right hon. Gentleman starts with a misconception. No such agreement has yet been made.

Mr. Hattersley: The Prime Minister must know that as recently as this weekend the Foreign Secretary was telling our European partners—and let Mr. Delors' office know—that the Government would not stand in the way of Mr. Delors' reappointment. Since the Prime Minister, or at least the Foreign Secretary, has said in private that the Government support Mr. Delors' reappointment, is it not deplorable that the Prime Minister does not have the courage to say so in public? Is that not typically second rate?

The Prime Minister: I repeat to the right hon. Gentleman, who has more experience of second-rate matters than most of us in this House, that no firm decision, no Cabinet decision, on the reappointment of Mr. Delors has yet been made. There are many things still to be determined about that appointment.

Indeed, there are two appointments to be considered. I refer, first, to the temporary appointment for two years of the President of the Commission, to be made shortly, and thereafter to the appointment for five years, to run through the full length of the next Parliament. I am concerned to ensure that we get the right appointment for both terms.

Sir Malcolm Thornton *rose*—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"] Has my right hon. Friend appreciated that in August this year the transatlantic tall ships race will arrive in Liverpool? Is he aware that in the eight years since the race's last visit the port of Liverpool has been transformed, justifying the Government's decision to award free port status to Liverpool? Will my right hon. Friend wish the port and the organisers of the event August every success?

The Prime Minister: I do so with great pleasure, for I think that such congratulations are well deserved—as are the congratulations to my hon. Friend on his recent award.

Mr. Ashdown: In the light of the Prime Minister's answer to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), has he noted that one of his own officials described Jacques Delors as a President of the European Commission of outstanding integrity and competence? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree?

The Prime Minister: I think that Mr. Delors has many qualities.

Mr. Marlow: Can the Prime Minister tell the House how the exchange rate mechanism affects the ability of Her Majesty's Government to set interest rates compatible with the level of activity of the United Kingdom economy?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, since we became members of the ERM we have used it as the centre of our anti-inflationary policy. As a result, inflation—both headline inflation and core inflation—has fallen dramatically since a period when it was far too high. It remains the Government's policy to meet the convergence criteria set out in the Maastricht treaty, not just for the treaty but for their own sake as well. For that purpose, and for the reduction and eventual elimination of inflation, we intend fully to sustain our commitment to the exchange rate mechanism.

Q3. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McFall: Although the Maxwell spying allegations make interesting reading and may prove that the Government have more responsibility in the affair than has hitherto been stated, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the banks should return the £200 million assets which they do not own? Does he agree that he should direct the Treasury to use its powers under section 4(3) of the Bank of England Act 1946 to recover the money which the banks do not own?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the special unit announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security will actively assist the trustees in securing the return of assets.

If the earlier half of the hon. Gentleman's question was aimed in the direction I think it was, I can state clearly that the Government had no information about Mr. Maxwell's financial affairs, contrary to what was alleged in the *Financial Times* yesterday, whether in 1989 or subsequently. I saw no such information, my office saw no such information, and nor did any Minister—for the very good reason that it never existed.

Mr. Budgen: Does my right hon. Friend agree that what is now required in considering the Maastricht treaty is some objective analysis of its detailed effects? Is he aware that the Conservative Lawyers recently published a pamphlet saying that the doctrine of subsidiarity was virtually useless in terms of providing any protection against the further unwanted expansion of European laws and institutions? In view of the considerable misunderstanding that has arisen since the passing of the Single European Act, is it not important to publish either the advice of the Attorney-General about the effect of the treaty or at least a White Paper? It would be unfortunate if Ministers advocated the treaty in general and euphoric terms but it was subsequently found to have a different meaning when considered by the Commission or the court.

The Prime Minister: I always read carefully what the Conservative Lawyers have to say—often in agreement, but perhaps not always in total agreement. My hon. Friend asked about subsidiarity, and I agree with the substantive part of his point, which is that we should spedily clarify its practical applications. In the next few weeks that will most certainly be one of our priorities during our presidency.

Q4. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Griffiths: Will the Prime Minister join me in congratulating the Scottish football team on its tremendous, spirited performance in Sweden? Will he also congratulate Scottish fans on their exemplary performance to date and reprimand the Secretary of State for National Heritage for his ill-founded and ignorant comments about "British" fans when British fans were not to blame?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to congratulate the Scottish team on its fine performance and I regret that it was not successful in proceeding further in the competition. I hope that on future occasions the team will do better. I certainly condemn the lawlessness of a small minority of English supporters. As my right hon. Friend has made entirely clear, they have sullied our reputation abroad.

Q5. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Paice: Will my right hon. Friend find time to read yesterday's *Hansard*, especially the Adjournment debate by my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick)?

Mr. Cryer: And the money resolution last night.

Mr. Paice: There was no money resolution on the Adjournment debate. That debate was about the National Union of Students and about suggestions of abuse of public money, and my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley was supported by many Conservative Members. Will the Prime Minister urge the Secretary of State for Education to act quickly to remove one of the last bastions of compulsory union membership?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education is considering action on student unions. As my hon. Friend said, we shall seek to move in the direction of the voluntary principle.

Q6. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pike: We all know that the Prime Minister opposes a national minimum wage. There are millions of people on low pay and hundreds of thousands on poverty wages. Does he disagree with his predecessor that low pay is better than no pay, or will he do something to ensure that people have a reasonable living wage? Does he accept that in 1992 there should be a fair day's pay for a fair day's work?

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that anyone disagrees with the hon. Gentleman's final proposition, but it is equally true that people who receive low pay would rather that than receive no pay.

Q7. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Shaw: Can my right hon. Friend state whether his office has any information about the meeting in Liechtenstein tomorrow to explain the role of Liechtenstein lawyers and others in secreting away Maxwell family moneys? Will he confirm that the Government will take every action necessary against Liechtenstein to ensure that any money due to Maxwell pensioners is returned to the pension funds as soon as possible?

The Prime Minister: I had no knowledge of that particular meeting, but in the light of my hon. Friend's remarks I will make inquiries.

Mr. Hoyle: As the Prime Minister has read the reports in the *Financial Times*, he must be aware that they mention not only Maxwell but other national companies being under surveillance. If that is so, will the right hon. Gentleman say who signed the warrants allowing that to take place?

The Prime Minister: I have no intention of dealing with matters of that sort. The hon. Gentleman knows that very well. Every previous Government have consistently declined to comment on the activities of the intelligence and security services. I made the point perfectly clear in respect of Maxwell because of the damaging effect that the report could have had on Maxwell pensioners.

National Economic Development Council

3.30 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement.

The National Economic Development Council and the National Economic Development Office were established in 1962. In the 1960s and 1970s, they provided a helpful forum in which the overall economy and the performance of individual sectors could be discussed and debated. Much useful work was done then, and successive Governments in that period valued the role that NEDC played.

But the era of corporatism has long passed.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] In the last decade, Governments, not just in Britain but across the world, have pursued more market-oriented policies, the promotion of competition, and the smooth functioning of market mechanisms. There have been radical changes to the structure of business and industry. The number of small firms and of the self-employed has grown rapidly. Large parts of the former public sector have been privatised, and international markets are increasingly integrated.

The British work force have become more skilled and more specialised, with more flexible working practices and more varied career patterns. Trade union membership has declined, and in the private sector, decentralised wage bargaining has become the norm rather than the exception.

Against that background, it is clear that the NEDC no longer reflects the needs and realaties of the British economy in the 1990s. Since its inception, the council has been dominated by producer interests, but its membership and structure cannot hope to represent fully the interests and views of the whole range of industry or of the work force. And, paradoxically, the continued existence of the NEDC in those changed circumstances may actually have inhibited, rather than encouraged, the development of direct contact on specific issues between the Government and trade unions and other employee associations. Accordingly, and after careful consideration, the Government have decided that the National Economic Development Council should now be abolished. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

The council's sector groups and working parties will also be wound up. Over the years, they made a valuable contribution, and some of the issues addressed by the council and those sub-groups will of course remain on the agenda. Those most closely concerned with the present range of NEDO's consultative activities may decide that they want to continue to liaise with each other, but it will be for them to decide what is done, and how.

The National Economic Development Office has served the council and the sector groups and working parties well, but with the end of the council, and the change in the way that the Government intend to approach more detailed issues, the office itself will no longer have a role. Accordingly, its work will be wound down in an orderly fashion over the next six months. The office will close on 31 December this year.

It is the intention of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to offer employment to a small number of NEDO staff in his Department. There may also be opportunities in other Government Departments. Those who do not secure employment in the civil service will be eligible for redundancy compensation by analogy with the usual civil service rules. There will be full consultation with staff and their representatives on the handling of redundancies, and the applicable terms of existing redundancy procedure agreements will be fully honoured.

I should like to make it clear that today's announcement is no reflection on the work done by the staff of the office, or the sector groups and working parties. I wish to add a particular note of thanks to Dr. Walter Eltis for his work as director-general.

The Government continue to attach particular importance to improving the effectiveness of our dialogue with industry. Indeed, in recent years we have consulted more frequently and with a wider range of interests than in the past on complex technical subjects. That is true both in the formulation of domestic policy, and in the development of the United Kingdom's response to the increasing range of draft EC directives as the single market approaches. This partnership has served Britain well, and it will continue. The Government will be alert to the interests of industry in developing policies across the range of its activities. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has already announced his intention to reshape some of his Department on a more sectoral basis. He will be announcing details before the summer recess.

The Government remain fully committed to maintaining a close dialogue with industry and with all other relevant interests, but I believe that the decision to bring the National Economic Development Council to an end is the right one. A close relationship between the Government and industry remains as essential as ever if we are to develop policies to create in Britain a strong, dynamic and competitive economy, but the age of corporatism must be put firmly behind us.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): Does it not pass belief that—unemployment having risen for 24 consecutive months, growth having fallen for seven consecutive quarters and manufacturing investment having been in continuous decline for more than two years; with the number of business failures still rising and at record levels, and with a worsening balance of payments deficit in the midst of the longest recession since the 1930s—all that this wretched Government can do is abolish the only forum that brings together industry, finance and unions to discuss solutions to our deep-seated economic problems? That is an act of industrial vandalism.

Have not the Government noticed that all our most successful competitors encourage, rather than frustrate, the creation of a consensus about the priorities of economic and industrial policy? What makes a Government with such a dismal record believe that it is wise to dismantle a means of co-operation, dialogue and consensus? Is it because they do not like what NEDO has been telling them? Is NEDO paying the price for telling the truth about realities of the British economy?

Is NEDO to be eliminated because, in its report on the lessons to be learned from Germany and Japan, it exposed Britain's poor performance in education and training, and our poor record on innovation? Is it to be abolished because, in its report on electronics, it highlighted the urgent need to improve our technological base? Or is it to

be dismantled because, in its report on engineering, it revealed the poverty of our skills in engineering, compared to those of our competitors such as Germany?

Is it not a sad reflection on the Government that they react to criticism—however constructive, expert and well intentioned—by saying that the critics must be eliminated? The Government first ignore the message, then shoot the messenger.

Does the Chancellor recollect that in his book "Where There's a Will", published in 1987, the President of the Board of Trade observed:

"NEDO's potential value is high, as the one forum where Ministers regularly meet senior representatives of industry, the unions, and the City."

The right hon. Gentleman went on to suggest that the holder of his office, not the Chancellor, should take the chair. Is it not the case that, just as the right hon. Gentleman was about to claim the seat, the Chancellor has whipped the chair away?

Is not this the end of all the ludicrous pretences by the President of the Board of Trade that this Administration take a positive attitude to building a consensus for an industrial strategy? Is it not clear to everyone in British industry that as our economic prospects worsen, the Government are more concerned to control criticism than to benefit from the advice of those with real experience of the problems of industry and commerce in our country today?

Mr. Lamont: The right hon. and learned Gentleman's words might have more force if the course of action that we have taken today had not been urged on me by many on the council—many of the industrialists—who think it has outlived its usefulness. The right hon. and learned Gentleman will also find that the director general of the Confederation of British Industry has welcomed my decision. The right hon. and learned Gentleman used to go to NEDC many years ago, but it does not serve the purpose that it may have served in the past.

I made it clear in the statement that we believe that it is right for the Government to talk to industry on particular problems and via particular parts of the economy. That will be done more productively and effectively within Ministries rather than by having the highly publicised and highly politicised meetings that have produced very few results. The right hon. and learned Gentleman referred to various economic developments. I do not see why he thinks that anything in the British economy has been affected by what has happened at NEDC meetings.

Sir Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): If my right hon. Friend's lengthy statement, with its misuse of the word "corporatism", means that in future the vital discussions between all parts of industry for the future of this country will be undertaken by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—or President of the Board of Trade, as he prefers to be called—I welcome this wholeheartedly, because it gets the Treasury out of the way. In all my experience of Neddy, the Treasury was a pain in the neck. Now, perhaps we will have proper consultation.

Mr. Lamont: I am pleased that, at least in some spirit, my right hon. Friend can welcome my statement. I am sorry that I have to disappoint him somewhat. As I have already made clear to the CBI and the Trades Union Congress, it is our intention that all Government Departments will talk to both sides of industry about problems that have to be addressed in the interests of the economy. That will continue.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Why did the Government reject the CBI's earlier proposal for a smaller and less formal body working to the Department of Trade and Industry instead of the Treasury? Is not the main anxiety of business not what institution it has but whether the Government are taking any notice, which they have manifestly failed to do, of what industry has been saying about training, research and development and transport?

If there is no formal structure, what is to prevent the President of the Board of Trade from choosing merely those bits of industry to which he wants to listen rather than industry as a whole, and listening mainly to the new corporations who luxuriate in monopoly and use the monopoly powers that they have been given in the privatisation process to rip off the consumer?

Mr. Lamont: I entirely accept the right hon. Gentleman's point that it is the macro-economic policies that determine industrial and economic performance. Setting up a committee in Millbank does not solve the problems of the real world and the real economy. Decisions are made by individuals and businesses, not at a sectoral level. As I have explained, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will be looking at some of the work of the sectoral working parties. He will be seeing how the most valuable parts of that work could be used within the Department of Trade and Industry.

On the right hon. Gentleman's second point, I can assure him that the CBI backs the Government's macro-economic strategy, and has said so publicly on many occasions.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that supporters of the free market welcome his statement, as it demolishes a pillar of the corporate state that is so beloved by socialists and, it seems, by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath)? How many bureaucrats are employed by this organisation, and what will be the savings to the Exchequer as a result of his announcement?

Mr. Lamont: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I must be careful about the use of the word "corporatist". There are 100 staff employed in the council. I have said that normal redundancy procedures will apply and that some staff may find employment in the civil service. It costs more than £5·5 million per annum to run the NEDC.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Since the Government have been contemptuous of Neddy for so long, is it surprising that it has had so little effect on the Government? When Harold Macmillan set it up, was it not clear that it was not a corporatist idea but a means of getting Government and industry together? We do not have so many such organisations today that we can dispense with the most important one that we have.

Mr. Lamont: It is certainly not true to say that the Government have taken no notice of what has been said at council meetings. I am afraid that the motivation for the announcement is quite different from what the right hon.

[Mr. Lamont]

Gentleman is saying. It is simply that council discussions have not made a worthwhile contribution to the formulation of policy.

Having participated in those discussions for 16 months, I am genuinely convinced that, when there are specific issues to be addressed, a much more useful dialogue with both sides of industry can be conducted in private, rather than the highly confrontational, highly publicised and highly politicised discussions that we have had in recent years. I accept that the work of the sectoral working parties has had some value, and we shall try to preserve that.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): If institutional changes are to be made at a time when Britain continues to run a huge adverse trade balance, may we perhaps look at some of the institutions in competitor countries that have contributed to those countries running large surpluses on their trade balance, such as the Industrial bank of Japan and the Export-Import bank of Japan, to see whether we may not have something to learn from them?

Mr. Lamont: I am sure that it is always useful to study what happens in other countries, but it is extremely difficult to translate the institutions of one country into another. It is extremely difficult to make an analysis, above all, of Japan and say, "We wish to incorporate into our economy the institutions that Japan has."

As my hon. Friend will appreciate, the thrust of what I have been saying is that I do not think that, alas, the work done in the council in particular, rather than in the office, has had a big impact on policy making, the performance or the trade balance of the British economy. None of those things will be altered in future, and I do not think that they have been any different in the past because of what has been discussed and done there.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): While it must be a sad day for those people who will lose their jobs, I must tell the Chancellor of the Exchequer that I cannot agree with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) about shedding tears for NEDO. Is the Chancellor aware that, in the past 13 years, it has done little to stop the pit closure programme? It has done nothing about the massive balance of payments difficulties that Britain is in.

We have a public sector borrowing requirement of probably £40 billion and, quite frankly, I do not want to see trade union leaders mixing with bosses and supping claret down in the City. I hope that what the Chancellor has said today will prove to them that it is time that they got back to the real job of representing their workers in the many class struggles that lie ahead.

Mr. Lamont: I thought that I was going to agree with the hon. Gentleman when he started off. The first part of his remarks were rather good, but they deteriorated towards the end, not just from the point of view of his right hon. and learned Friend the shadow Chancellor but also from my point of view. But the hon. Gentleman is right: the NEDC has not had a bearing on industrial developments, the developments in the coal industry or other industries. Completely different ways of addressing the problems exist, and I am sure that they will be more fruitfully addressed. I note how the hon. Gentleman describes the NEDC.

I should comment on one point that has been repeatedly made in the exchanges: the description of our balance of payments deficit as being massive. It was 1 per cent. of GDP last year, an amount which is easily financeable. Financing it will certainly not pose a problem.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Does my right hon. Friend think that it will be lost on the general public that, at a time when the TUC is packing its bags and leaving NEDO, it is about to exercise a controlling influence on the leadership of the Labour party? Is not one of the more attractive aspects of the decision that my right hon. Friend has announced today the fact that this is another area of public life where the baleful influence of the TUC will be reduced?

Mr. Lamont: I note my hon. Friend's comment. The only point that I would make is that of course we shall talk to trade unions, but only when there are specific issues that can be usefully addressed. There has been no point in the regular meetings every three months at that level always discussing macro-economic issues, not producing anything particularly fruitful.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Does this mean that the Northern Ireland Economic Council will also be abolished consequentially? If so, does the Chancellor realise that that will be widely regarded as a retrograde step as the Northern Ireland council has been one of the few sources of decent analysis and scrutiny of the economy there, possibly because it is one of the few bodies that is not a quango appointed by the Northern Ireland Office?

The Chancellor said that he, or his colleague, the President of the Board of Trade, will maintain sectoral sub-committees. Will there be committees operating on a regional basis, because that is just as important?

Mr. Lamont: The answer is no: my announcement today will not affect the Northern Ireland council. The hon. Gentleman may have slightly misunderstood what I was saying. It is not the intention to create lots of committees or to rebuild NEDO elsewhere, and it is certainly not the intention to re-create the sectoral working parties. There are useful aspects that can be kept but, as far as I am aware, there will not be regional committees of the kind that the hon. Gentleman is advocating.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will my right hon. Friend and all other hon. Members stop talking about "both sides" of industry? They are both on the same side. They are both in one team. If they cannot talk to each other, why on earth is it assumed that a quango could make them do so? How much has it cost to have all those officials and secretaries talking such nonsense for so long in that ridiculous organisation whose requiem we are attending today?

Mr. Lamont: I agree with my hon. and learned Friend's first point about both sides of industry. That is obviously a correct point. As I have already said, the cost of the organisation was in excess of £5 million a year.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The responsibility for all the closures and the rest that have occurred which have been described by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) lies with the Tory Government,

not with NEDO. Is the Chancellor aware that his decision today shows that the Government have no time at all for any continuous dialogue with the trade unions and have contempt for the representatives of working people and for what Harold Macmillan tried to do? However much we disagreed with him in various aspects, nevertheless he tried to moderate Government policy and recognised the necessity for co-operation in industry involving the trade unions. Is not this decision one of sheer spite and malice, which will be recognised as such by a large body of people in the country?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman is talking complete and utter nonsense. I know that Opposition Members are instinctively bureaucratic—see a problem and they want to set up a committee. That is their answer to every problem. We all know what the shadow Chancellor wanted to do with Neddy, because he set out his proposals in his manifesto. He wanted it to make a national economic assessment, and he intended to use it to introduce a minimum wage in Britain. That would have done wonders for the British economy.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Does not my right hon. Friend agree that it is typical that the Labour party still believes that the formal mechanisms of the 1960s are right and appropriate for the needs of the 1990s? Will not British industry fully welcome the dialogue with the Government, which it wants, being conducted more directly and effectively in the revamping of the sectoral groups under the DTI's aegis?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is entirely right. We believe in dialogue with industry, as I said explicitly. Right hon. and hon. Opposition Members seem to believe more in theatricals than in useful talking.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): What assurances can the Chancellor give those of us who are getting worried about the position of the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)? Under the previous regime, he used to write books advocating an industrial policy and used to say that we should not ignore the deficits. Therefore, when we saw the announcement on the monitor, we thought that we were going to be told that he was to become the president of Neddy, but it is to be abolished. What does it mean? Does it mean that the right hon. Member for Henley has been taken prisoner and that his ideas have been completely swamped in the Government?

Mr. Lamont: What it means is that my right hon. Friend and I are in total agreement on this issue.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on having the courage to take a decision that should have been taken a long time ago? Does he accept that, to ensure a thriving industrial and commercial sector of the economy, it is necessary to have business men with entrepreneurial skills who have the capability to seek and identify the needs of the marketplace and then to satisfy those needs rather than an irrelevant, highly politicised talking shop where the occupants go around in circles, listening to political hyperbole?

Mr. Lamont: I am grateful to my hon. Friend; what he says is right. We talk about an industrial strategy, but what we need is a strategy for low inflation, low taxes and profitability of industry. That is what the country needs, and that is how we shall achieve growth.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Does the Chancellor accept that one interpretation of the announcement is that it increases the powers of Mr. President who is sitting beside him? Does he believe that the right hon. Gentleman is fully equipped to deal with all the awesome responsibilities being heaped on him? How many extra civil servants will the DTI need to pursue sectoral work previously undertaken by Neddy? Is not the real reason for the Government abolishing Neddy the fact that any analysis of a Neddy report would show that the Government had already abolished economic development?

Mr. Lamont: As I said, it is possible that a few of the personnel employed in NEDO may be found employment elsewhere in Whitehall, and a small number in the DTI. We shall not be increasing numbers in the DTI; we are talking about a small number of officials. I made it clear that we hope that work of value by the sectoral working parties can be preserved and developed, but it can be done in a much more useful way in the DTI than in the existing structure.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): My right hon. Friend talked about the welcome given to the announcement by the Confederation of British Industry. Has he had any consultation with the Engineering Employers Federation or the Association of British Chambers of Commerce about the matter, because they are known to be rather more responsive than the CBI to the needs and interests of manufacturing industry? Does my right hon. Friend accept that manufacturing industry is a vital ingredient in a stable and successful economy? Will there be a forum for manufacturing industry under the new regime?

Mr. Lamont: Both the Engineering Employers Federation and the Association of British Chambers of Commerce are of course constantly engaged in discussing problems with the Government, and their views are very much taken into account in Government decisions. We know that they are very much in favour of dialogue, and we intend to continue discussions with them.

As for manufacturing, as I have said many times, and as I have told my hon. Friend, who I know is deeply interested in and deeply committed on the subject, we see manufacturing as an extremely important part of the British economy, to which we should devote special attention.

Mr. John Spellar (Warley, West): Before my reincarnation in the House, I was a member of the electronic components committee of NEDO. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that nobody ever attended for the quality of the lunch. The meetings were attended by many senior chairmen of electronics companies, and very effective dialogue took place.

Dialogue can take place only on an on-going basis rather than on the basis of people being called in on a specific issue. When a specific issue is discussed, no future strategy—in an industry such as electronics, no long-term strategy—can be developed. It will be astonishing to countries such as Germany and Japan that we are taking

[Mr. John Spellar]

such a decision to break down the dialogue between Government and industry. Can the Chancellor not show some humility by listening to the views of industry and learning from the experiences of other countries where such a system works so effectively?

Mr. Lamont: I am not sure what the hon. Gentleman would make of the United States or Canada, and I am not sure how he thinks their highly successful economies are performing and how matters there are arranged in terms of discussion between industry and Government. The hon. Gentleman talks about dialogue on an "on-going basis" and says that that is the only basis on which there can be dialogue. That seems to be a recipe for bureaucracy rather than for anything else. Dialogue on specific issues is what we should seek.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): My right hon. Friend seems to place all his faith in macro-economic policies, such as maintaining high levels of real interest, and the Treasury as a panacea for the ills of British industry. Will he therefore at least talk to his right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and ensure that he finds time in this place to make it a genuine forum of the nation for debate on industrial issues? Will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House at least reconstitute at the earliest possible date the Select Committee on Trade and Industry which was admirably chaired in the previous Parliament by Mr. Kenneth Warren, the former Member for Hastings and Rye?

Is it not a fact that industrial experience in this place is gravely deficient, not least in the ranks of Government? Is it not true that probably only half a dozen members of the Government have any real industrial experience? Should they not welcome any dialogue they can obtain with people engaged in industry?

Mr. Lamont: I know of my hon. Friend's great interest in manufacturing industry. I am not in any way altering the balance between macro-economic policy and micro-economic policy, or the the balance between the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry. My hon. Friend may like to think of it in these terms. I am simply addressing the forum and the form in which discussions between industry, the Government and the Trades Union Congress take place.

Having participated in those discussions, in my opinion —I know that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade strongly agrees—the NEDO does not practically today serve the interests of the British economy. It has outlived its usefulness. I will, of course, draw the attention of the Leader of the House to my hon. Friend's point about the Select Committee.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Is not the small-minded announcement of the abolition of the NEDO today really a smokescreen to cover an intensely embarrassing announcement which the Chancellor had to make? Is it not intended to divert attention from the really crucial point at the end of the statement, which is that we shall return to a sectoral role for the Department of Trade and Industry? Does not that mean that the philosophy that the Chancellor followed in his previous years at the Department of Trade and Industry—the hands-off, non-interventionist policy—is being reversed by the President of the Board of Trade, and that the Chancellor is trying to find a way to hide that fact?

Mr. Lamont: That is not the case. The right hon. Gentleman has considerable talent for seeing plots everywhere; they do not accord with reality. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and I are at one on the issue.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. We must now move on to the next business.

BILLS PRESENTED

Reform of the House of Lords

Mr. Graham Allen presented a Bill to abolish the House of Lords as presently composed and to provide for a new directly elected membership based on Parliamentary constituencies: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 37.]

Written Constitution

Mr. Graham Allen presented a Bill to provide for the drawing up of a written constitution for the United Kingdom; for its consideration by the people and Parliament of the United Kingdom; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 38.]

Human Rights

Mr. Graham Allen presented a Bill to provide protection in the courts of the United Kingdom for the rights and freedoms specified in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms to which the United Kingdom is a party; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 39.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to Statutory Instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Drug Trafficking (Scotland)

That the draft Confiscation of the Proceeds of Drug Trafficking (Designated Countries and Territories) (Scotland) Amendment Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

Forfeiture Orders (Scotland)

That the draft Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990 (Enforcement of Overseas Forfeiture Orders) (Scotland) Amendment Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—[Mr. Kirkhope.]

Question agreed to.

Opposition Day

[2ND ALLOTTED DAY]

Water Privatisation

Madam Speaker: Before we commence, I should tell the House that I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.5 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I beg to move,

That this House is alarmed at the record profits, record dividends and record salaries and perks of top management in the water companies, especially at a time when households are facing record water bills and record levels of disconnections; and calls on the Director General of Water Services to ensure that the interests of water consumers and the environment are given greater priority than the interests of shareholders.

This issue is causing increasing concern to many families. Water bills are now at such a level that they are a major item of expenditure for many, and an increasing number of people have found themselves in debt as a result. Many other families and small businesses have found that, in the main, the privatised water companies are unsympathetic to the problems that they have created, and use every opportunity to maximise their profits—from charging churches, mosques and scout huts as commercial operations, to demanding infrastructure charges for the change of use of a property, when no new connection is required. All that is happening at a time of severe restriction on water use.

To add insult to injury, in the year since we last debated the issue there have been further massive increases in the salaries of top management, and we have learnt more about the multi-million pound perks on offer to the favoured few.

Several years ago the present Secretary of State for the Environment—who is absent from the debate—and I served on the Standing Committee on the Water Bill, with other hon. Members. I regret that the Secretary of State for the Environment does not see fit to speak in this debate, as the issue is important enough to warrant the attention of a Cabinet Minister.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean): Who says so?

Mrs. Taylor: Me. The hon. Gentleman should acknowledge that the problems faced by so many people in this country—the problems of the water industry and of water resources—warrant the attention of a Cabinet Minister. It is to the Opposition's credit that we felt that it was appropriate for a member of the Shadow Cabinet to have responsibility for environment protection. It is a pity that the Government cannot take the matter as seriously.

In Committee, the Government always had a majority, but we always won the arguments. The Secretary of State has returned to the Department of the Environment. Despite his absence, we shall remind his junior Ministers and others of what has happened to the water industry since those Committee days.

I shall draw the attention of the House to three main problems. The first is the difficulties that water privatisation has caused to so many people and families and the second is the inadequacies of the present system of regulating the water industry. Thirdly, I shall explain why the Government's obsession with water privatisation has directed attention away from the real and significant problems faced by so many consumers, which was highlighted by yesterday's decision by the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will the hon. Lady confirm that the water industry needs more investment and that, since privatisation, there has been a massive increase in such investment?

Mrs. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman must bide his time, because I intend to talk about investment in the water industry. I share the concern expressed by the Director General of Water Services that consumers are having to pay too much for that investment. The responsibility for the size of the bills rests fairly and squarely with the Government because of the deal that they did at the time of privatisation.

Throughout the debates on the water industry in the late 1980s, Labour hon. Members warned of the problems on the horizon in relation to water resources. We now know that those problems could be even more severe because of global warming. Had the Government devoted as much energy, not to mention taxpayers' money, to tackling those problems as they did to privatisation, the problem posed by water resources might not be so severe today.

What has water privatisation meant for ordinary families? In Committee the then Minister of State, now the absent Secretary of State, often accused me of scaremongering when we discussed prices and the likely effect of privatisation on water bills. Let me remind Conservative Members of the increases in water bills faced by their constituents since privatisation. The increases range from 35 per cent. in Yorkshire Water to 56 per cent. in South West Water. The average household water bill has increased by 47·1 per cent. since privatisation. Water charges have risen by almost three times the rate of inflation. As I said, the then Minister of State accused me of scaremongering when I suggested such price increases.

I have looked at the *Hansard* reports of those Committee proceedings, which are very interesting, and which perhaps explain the Secretary of State's absence, because he then said:

"any price increase will be modest."

When he was cornered, he produced his own figures. He claimed that, by the end of the century,

"the increase in charges . . . is likely to be between 7·5 per cent. and 12·5 per cent."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 26 January 1989; c. 539-42.]

I had hoped that the Secretary of State would be here to tell us why he was so wrong and we were so right, but he has failed to turn up to listen and to answer for the consequences of his remarks.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): The hon. Lady said that water charges had risen by 56 per cent. in South West Water. In her calculations has she taken into account the fact that South West Water, like other water companies up and down the country, has had to carry out a massive capital programme, which was forced upon it by edicts from Brussels and elsewhere?

Mrs. Taylor: Conservative Members are searching for somebody else to blame. The simple fact is that at the time of debates on the Water Bill, we knew all about all the anticipated obligations from Brussels and we made our

[Mrs. Taylor]

calculations on the basis of all the information that was available. It is such a pity that the Secretary of State sought to mislead the House and the country at that time.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): The hon. Lady referred, fairly, to the cost of water charges in the west country and we will hear more about them today. Is she saying that the work being done in that region to clean up coastal waters is not necessary? While savouring that point, will she reflect upon the fact that if her arguments on privatisation mean that she would want to return the industry to state control, that means that, in addition to the £8 billion that would be necessary to renationalise the industry, she would have to find an extra £25 billion to go ahead with the investment programme? Will she deal with those points?

Mrs. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman is not well known for his patience—*[Interruption.]* If he exercises a little patience today and stays for some of the debate, I promise to explain why the nature of the privatisation is increasing the cost of that capital investment to the consumer and is causing concern to the director general.

It is not surprising that the enormous price rises should have led to difficulties for many families. Those difficulties have been made worse by the harsh attitude of some water companies, as is clear from the number of court actions for debt taken by companies and by the level of disconnections. It is a staggering fact that in one year alone, 900,000 court summonses were instigated by water companies. That meant about one house in 25, or at least one household in every street, receiving a summons for water debt. Many of those summonses were taken out against people who had never been in debt before. Often they were pensioners or people on fixed incomes, who receive no help with their water bills and for whom the water bill is often larger than the poll tax bill.

In addition to the financial difficulties that water bills have caused, plus the cost of the summons, some water companies have taken the ultimate step against consumers of turning off water supplies—of disconnecting families in debt. Last week's Ofwat report on disconnections showed the tragic consequences of water bills, with 21,000 households having had their water supplies disconnected. That represented a staggering 177 per cent. increase in the number of disconnections in just one year.

We also received last week a National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux report giving graphic examples of the hardship that has been caused and of the cavalier attitude adopted by some water companies. The company in mid-Kent, in the constituency of the Secretary of State, disconnected a customer who was 80 per cent. disabled. The company then even refused to talk to the CAB representative about the problem.

The CAB in Berkshire reported on a water company that had gone so far as to seek possession of a tenant's home for arrears of £38·63. Yorkshire Water sent those behind with their bills incorrect information claiming that the DSS would make an allowance for those on benefit who were having difficulty paying their water bills. That statement was not true.

Disconnections on such a scale are not acceptable. I was informed—I checked the information—that 19 of 80 flats in a block of flats in Sandwell had their water disconnected last year. That is the scale of the problem. The Director General of Water Services has expressed concern about the issue. He should be concerned. So should the Secretary of State for Health. But it is not good enough simply to be concerned. The Government should be intervening to give protection to consumers facing such problems.

The water companies' licence should be amended to ensure that no one is disconnected unless they wilfully refuse to pay. Ministers should re-examine with a sense of urgency the arrangements for helping those on benefit, who receive inadequate assistance with their water bills at present.

All those problems for individuals and families must be viewed against the background of the water companies' financial performance. As the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean), acknowledged in Rio, this country is in a deep recession. One of the consequences of the recession has been the record number of business failures and the downturn in profits for so many previously successful companies. Indeed, only last week we heard that Pilkington's profits had halved and companies in every sector, from construction to motor manufacture, have suffered because of the recession.

However, that has not been the case for the water companies, which is not surprising, as each of them has a private monopoly of an essential service. Ministers always object to our quoting water company profits, which is not surprising either when one looks at those profits. Thames Water announced recently that its profits were up to £236 million and North West Water's profits stand at £230 million. But in some respects, I agree with the Minister.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): Does not the hon. Lady accept that North West Water's investment programme for badly needed environmental improvements is substantial? It is therefore inappropriate for the hon. Lady to criticise North West Water when it is clearly doing much to improve water quality, particularly in my constituency, and to combat the serious problems that were caused over many years by lack of investment by the Labour party.

Mrs. Taylor: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman consult Blackpool landladies and ask them what they think of their water bills. If he is proud of the investment programme, he should look at the salary of the chairman of North West Water and the share option perks that he has received, for which consumers are paying.

I was going to say that I agree with the Minister that profits do not tell the whole story. We should also look at dividends and share prices and at how the water companies' performance compares with that of the stockmarket as a whole. In general, water share prices are 80 per cent. above their level at the time of flotation in December 1989. Dividends were 16·3 per cent. more than predicted in the flotation prospectus in the first year alone. Such a performance by the water companies should not surprise us. After all, the Government rigged the system so much in favour of the water companies at the time of privatisation that those results were inevitable.

Even City analysts accept that that is so. If the Minister and Conservative Members do not believe me, they may believe Credit Lyonnais Lang. In its assessment of the water companies, it says:

"we think that investors in water shares will earn a very high total return. But this high return will be because the taxpayer has sold the industry cheap".

It was not the taxpayer but rather the Government who sold the industry cheap. When Ministers first talked about water privatisation, the expectation was that it would result in an increased income to the Exchequer of some £5 billion. Ultimately, water privatisation cost taxpayers £3·3 billion. That is the figure which we used and which the National Audit Office verified in its report this year.

The report of the National Audit Office also confirmed our suspicions about perks. If any local authority had misused the money for which it was responsible in the way that Ministers have misused taxpayers' money, it would have been, at best, surcharged, and its officials might well have ended up behind bars.

When the Government made their arrangements for the privatisation of the water industry, they did a deal with the industry's top management, giving them hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of perks. Three chairmen of water companies have benefited from share options to the tune of £250,000. The lowest benefit available to a water chairman is £62,000, at a time when record numbers of consumers have had their supplies cut off. How can the Minister defend that?

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): In her list of beneficiaries, does the hon. Lady include those in charge of the publicity for water services and regional boards? I recently wrote to the chairman of the Water Services Association and received a reply, not from him, but from an obscure publicity officer who clearly felt that I was about to trim his empire. Does the hon. Lady agree that the amount of junk mail arriving through our mail boxes, even this week, seems to have multiplied? It has now reached a level where every water board bombards us with completely useless and expensive literature.

Mrs. Taylor: The right hon. Gentleman makes a fair point. Individual water companies have bombarded us with information, most of it useless, and, as the right hon. Gentleman says, junk mail—misinformation. It is a sign of the water companies' weakness that they feel it imperative to defend themselves by going over the top and employing so many public relations companies.

At the time of privatisation, we warned what would follow, and we gain no satisfaction from being proved right, especially when the cost to so many people has been so great. However, the problem does not merely involve prices. We also warned that access to old water authority land would be restricted or charged for after that land had passed into private hands, without any compensation being given to the public to whom the land belonged. Both warnings have proved correct.

Yorkshire Water has restricted access to land such as Wessenden Head moor, where it has taken steps to block public access, at the insistence of its grouse-shooting tenants. Now, North West Water is drawing up plans for widespread charging. A document available from North West Water given to me at the weekend makes it clear that North West Water is planning a new charge structure for recreational activities on its land—from fell running to canoeing. It is even considering charging for birdwatching. The one decision that North West Water has made is that it will not charge for hunting, which shows whom it wants to keep in with.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Is my hon. Friend aware that the Welsh water authority has gone into the hotel business in a big way and made huge investments in it? It has also bought 15 per cent. of South Wales Electricity, at a time when the number of Welsh Water customers being disconnected has reached record levels.

Mrs. Taylor: My hon. Friend is right. The record of diversified activity by the water companies is incredible. As he said, Welsh Water has invested in a chain of hotels. In addition, one water company has purchased a stake in a television franchise—so much for its priorities.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Can the hon. Lady confirm that in socialist France the private water companies are encouraged to diversify? So why would a socialist Government in this country think differently?

Mrs. Taylor: France has a completely different system of public accountability in the water industry. That is what is so clearly absent in this country since privatisation.

Accountability brings me to the position of the watchdogs established at the time of privatisation. I will come to the role of the Director General of Water Services in a moment, but first I want to discuss the drinking water inspectorate—a rather grand title for the 20-odd civil servants at the Department of the Environment who monitor the information about drinking water quality given to them by the companies themselves. The last report of the inspectorate revealed more than 32,000 incidents of contamination. Such incidents are bound to happen from time to time, although with modern techniques and fail-safe devices they should be infrequent and minor. They are not always so, however.

What does the drinking water inspectorate do when there is a major incident? During debates at about this time last year, I asked the Minister about the outbreak of cryptosporidium in Humberside between December 1989 and May 1990, when 477 people were infected. It was clearly caused by the decision of Yorkshire Water to bypass the slow sand filters at Barnby treatment plant. Those affected have still not had a proper response from the drinking water inspectorate. The Yorkshire customer services committee has been pressing the Minister for action. He has refused action; he will not tell us in parliamentary answers what he intends to do.

Section 54 of the Water Act 1989 empowers the drinking water inspectorate to recommend that a supplier in these circumstances be prosecuted. Will the Minister take this opportunity to tell us whether such a recommendation has been made by the inspectorate and what he is doing to look after the interests of the people who were affected by the outbreak in Humberside? Either the drinking water inspectorate is toothless or the Minister is gutless and will not take on the privatised water companies.

Privatisation has meant record bills, record hardship and record disconnections. Where do we go from here to obtain proper protection for consumers and to deal with the essential problems of resource management? The role of the regulator is crucial in all this. We have said from the start that he has a difficult task. First, he is asked to serve two masters, the shareholder and the consumer, when what we need is a clear voice for consumers.

The second difficulty facing the director general stems from the initial deal that the Government gave the water companies. It was so generous that it is difficult for the

[Mrs. Taylor]

director general to plough it back. That Government deal set the framework for what has followed—the debt write-off, the green dowry and the assumptions about the financial regime of the water companies. I refer especially to the assumptions about the ratio of debt to equity, which were far too generous to the water companies. So desperate were the Government to be rid of this industry that they did a ridiculous deal with the companies, as the report of the National Audit Office shows.

The director general has rightly raised the issue of the cost of capital. He has issued a consultation document about that cost, which clearly shows that water company investment could be financed in other and cheaper ways. The director general says:

"There is no reason why investors in the water industry should be rewarded with returns in excess of those generally available in the finance markets."

The Government's priority was privatisation, and not the easiest or the cheapest way to bring about some of the necessary improvements. Their priority was the triumph of privatisation dogma, even over common sense.

The financial regime of the water companies means that today's consumers are paying not only for underinvestment in the 1980s but for the assets that will benefit future generations. Those assets should be funded over a longer period and the Director General of Water Services should demand that the water companies invest more through borrowing and not at the immediate expense of today's bill payers. The director general recognises that and must pursue the matter. It would help consumers if the Government backed him.

Last year, the Director General of Water Services took some action on the windfall profits of the water industry, which were higher than they would otherwise have been because construction costs fell significantly. Unfortunately, consumers benefited from that action to only a limited extent. The estimated balance of savings on operating expenditure was £132 million. The director general negotiated a voluntary abatement with the water companies on their K factor of just £40 million. That left a big gap of £92 million, which was used to boost the return to shareholders. What is worse, the deal between Ofwat and the companies was struck in private and no one was able to ensure that the public interest was protected.

The Secretary of State should oblige the director general to give a full account of the way in which that clawback was calculated. After all, the Ofwat annual report stated:

"The regulation of an essential public utility can only be successful if it wins the trust and support of the public and the industry. The basis of this trust is transparency in decision making and the involvement of the general public and industry as far in possible in that decision making process."

That public need to have confidence in the regulator, and such confidence does not exist. Part of the problem is that the Government have abdicated their responsibility and have opted out of treating water as a vital natural resource. They are treating it as a marketable commodity. Water is too important in individual and public health simply to be left to the market.

That brings me to my third area of concern, the resource management of water. The Government recently announced that they intend to issue a consultation paper on water conservation. Perhaps we shall hear more about that in the debate. That action is at best a bit late in the day. It would have been better if the Government had addressed such problems in the late 1980s rather than pursuing their obsession with privatisation. The fact that they intend to act is, I hope, an acknowledgement—albeit a tacit one—that they cannot leave everything to the market.

Yesterday, the National Rivers Authority announced that it was stepping in to tackle the problem caused by the water companies abstracting too much water from rivers and ground water sources. It is right for the NRA to be concerned about that, although it is strange that, while that action is being taken, some water companies are being allowed to supply water to owners of race tracks so that horses can have ideal conditions on which to practise. Golf courses are also receiving abundant supplies. The NRA was right to act, but it should not make decisions without a national strategy for water management and, without a Government lead, there cannot be such a strategy.

It is too easy for the NRA to make decisions affecting water companies' costs and for the companies then to apply to the regulator for cost pass through and for the customer to end up paying even more. That shows again the priority that ought to be given to someone who can speak up for consumers.

Water metering is the most obvious example of an apparent solution to water shortages which could create more problems than it overcomes. The case for metering on conservation grounds is not proven. Countries using metering generally have average higher consumption than Britain. Furthermore, increased water usage is often at the luxury end of the market—dishwashers, jacuzzis, garden sprinklers, and even swimming pools. Those who can afford such fixtures can probably afford to make an extra payment. At the other end of the spectrum, the impact of metering on large families and those who need extra water for medical reasons can be severe.

I read in the newspapers recently—perhaps I should not use the word "newspaper" in connection with *The Sun*, but similar reports appeared in other newspapers—that Ministers favour water metering. An unnamed Minister was quoted as justifying metering in this way:

"There is no excuse for draining the Lake District so that people in the south-east can fill their swimming pools and dishwashers."

I do not know whether the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, whose constituency is adjacent to the Lake district, was responsible for that comment. It would be helpful if he would tell us.

We are told also that the director general favours metering, and from my own discussions with him I believe that that is the case. As a northerner, I am not in favour of draining the Lake district, but it is simplistic in the extreme to seek compulsory universal metering as the answer to water shortages. It would be very costly. Estimates vary, but it is put at about £2 billion, and it would create problems for many. Incidentally, I am concerned that the survey on the social impact of the metering trials has not yet been published. Perhaps the Minister can tell us more about that.

Metering has also been promoted with the argument that rateable values will not exist after the year 2000. I do not like the council tax, but it would be better than putting people on compulsory metering. It is strange that a Government who talk about choice should even consider compulsory metering and will not offer the consumer a choice between it and banded charging.

The compulsory metering of new properties has already created many problems. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) provides an example from his constituency. He has even given me photographs, but I cannot show those to the House. In one clearance area of Blackburn, the same type of new properties have been built on the same site by both the local authority and a housing association.

The local authority homes were completed first, and their tenants receive water bills according to the properties' rateable values—typically of £170 a year. At the other end of the Calder Bank development are to be found the housing association properties, which were completed slightly later. The average water charge to their occupiers is double that paid by local authority tenants.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): The figures given by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), whose constituency is served by the same water authority as that which operates in my constituency, correspond almost precisely with figures currently being cited in respect of housing association properties in the Kirkby area. My hon. Friend's example is not unique, but is typical of the effect of water metering in the north-west.

Mrs. Taylor: It is not just North West Water that is creating such problems. They exist also in Yorkshire. Most water companies are stinging the owners of new properties. The experience of water metering generally is that it produces much higher bills and a great deal of hardship. I hope that before anyone goes headlong into promoting water metering, they will pause to consider the problems that it creates.

Sir Jim Spicer: Does the hon. Lady accept that for many people, especially elderly people living alone, water metering may seem an attractive option? She seems to have entirely written it off.

Mrs. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman has clearly not been listening. I was advocating choice. Those who want water meters should be allowed to opt for them; what I object to is compulsory metering by water companies for people who will gain no benefit and, indeed, will pay more.

Let me issue a word of warning to the hon. Gentleman. He should not mislead many elderly people living alone into thinking that their bills will be reduced automatically as a result of metering. Owing to the structure of payment, the standing charge is often so high that the total bill is substantial.

When we discuss water resources, we should bear in mind one of the industry's most significant problems, the easing of which would help to increase those resources. I refer to the problem of water leakage from the infrastructure. Figures from "Water Facts" show that, in 1990-91, leakage amounted to 29·3 per cent., or 97 litres per head per day. That far outweighs any likely saving from water metering and is of great concern to those who are currently subject to restrictions on water use.

Unfortunately, there is no incentive for the privatised water companies to decide, on the basis of common sense, to make leakage control a priority. That is no way in which to make decisions about our vital resources. The Government and the director general should insist that leakage is tackled, rather than pushing for compulsory water metering.

It is clear that water consumers face many problems, relating to both the level of charges and surety of supply. The Government should not sit back and leave the problems to the market: water is too important to each and every one of us. What is needed is proper public accountability, along with proper public decision making. It will be a sad look-out for every consumer if the Government turn their back on the problems.

4.47 pm

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'congratulates the Government on its highly successful policy of privatising the water industry, which will lead to £28 thousand million investment on water and sewerage infrastructure, maintaining the quality of drinking water, improving rivers, and reducing discharges into the sea, thereby benefiting customers and the environment alike; and welcomes the action of the National Rivers Authority to safeguard the water environment and the role of the Director General of Water Services as the powerful independent regulator to provide effective protection for the interests of all the industry's customers.'

The House may fairly ask why we are debating the water industry today. We are debating it because the Opposition are in a muddle: they are devoid of a leader, and devoid of policy or direction. In such circumstances, the Opposition always fall back on their old instinct to attack industry, enterprise and other people's successes.

No doubt in due course the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith)—who has now left the Chamber—will initiate yet another policy review, commission a few more opinion polls, consult even more gurus in the shadow communications agency and conclude that Labour can win the next election only if it supports the free market economy and private investment and rejects the renationalisation of industry, including the water industry. Until that uncomfortable truth eventually dawns on Her Majesty's Opposition yet again, however, they will continue with their old prejudices—prejudices which they have aired in the Chamber today.

Mr. Knapman: Will my hon. Friend be fair to the Opposition, and pay tribute to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett)? Although the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor)—and, for that matter, the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew)—were keen for the industry to be renationalised, the hon. Member for Derby, South was doubtful whether the party would be able to afford it in the foreseeable future. Opposition Members are not entirely agreed about that.

Mr. Maclean: That is absolutely true. There is quite a bit of confusion about Labour's plans for renationalisation of the water industry. I note that we have not heard from the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) exactly what was meant by taking the water industry into "public control", but I may touch on that later.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): How does the hon. Gentleman square his comment about renationalisation with the fact that, as far as I know, the only Government ever to nationalise the water industry were the Conservative Government, who did so in order to privatise it a couple of years later?

Mr. Maclean: That is rather too subtle even for an Opposition Member.

[Mr. Maclean]

It is clear that there was total confusion during the election campaign as the Leader of the Opposition said one thing, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said another and the hon. Member for Dewsbury said yet another. The truth did not emerge then, nor has it emerged today, but we may touch on it later.

The Opposition have chosen to debate the water industry today, not because they are concerned about the real water issues but because they can think of nothing better to do than indulge in some private enterprise bashing. What have they chosen to highlight? Is it the massive investment programme of £28,000 million? No, they pooh-pooh that. Is it the management of water resources and conservation—the most important long-term issue facing us? No, all we had was a little bit about that tacked on at the end of the hon. Lady's speech. Is it the drought in the south-east or the EC directives on drinking water quality and bathing beaches? No, none of those things, infinitely important though they are, appear in the Opposition motion today.

Instead, at a time when they want to distract attention from their internal squabbles and failings, they have fallen back on the old socialist certainties of knocking profits and dividends without having the nous to realise that there is no investment without profits, and without dividends there would be no shareholders to invest in the first place.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I appreciate that the Minister is new to his Department and thus may not recall that the Opposition had a similar debate earlier this year, which proves that we are consistent in our concern about consumers and the environment. The Minister has attacked our motion, so do I take it from that that he is happy to defend the level of salaries, dividends and perks paid to water authority chairmen?

Mr. Maclean: I do not mind being patronised. I have broad enough shoulders to take it. I shall refer to the level of salaries later. The Opposition always complain that they do not have enough Supply days. This is only their second this Session and they have a paltry 25 Members present to launch their attack. [HON. MEMBERS: "How many do the Government have?"] This is an Opposition day. It is not a Government day. We are supposed to be on the back foot defending a major Opposition attack. That is the level to which the Opposition have sunk.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclean: No, I want to continue a little further. We shall address the real issues. The fact that the Opposition do not know what they are is a measure of just how confused they are on this as on other policies.

Mr. Soley: Will the Minister give way on the real issues?

Mr. Maclean: I will come to the real issues myself.

For many years the water industry was held back from doing what needed to be done by the fact that it was part of the public sector. Time and again, the amount that it could invest was subject to severe limits or even, as happened after 1976, to savage cuts. It is hardly surprising that serious backlogs developed.

The water industry could never compete with the national health service or education in public expenditure rounds.

Mr. George Howarth: Before the Minister broadens his argument so much that he loses sight of the arguments put by my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), will he explain to me the justice in a new three-bedroomed housing association property in Southdene in my constituency being charged twice as much through a meter for its water as a three-bedroomed council house just over the road whose charge is fixed on the basis of its water rates?

Mr. Maclean: I shall not comment on individual cases in different water authorities. That is the job of Ofwat and its director general, who has a broad over-view of how metering may work and how water companies fix their charges. The hon. Gentleman falls into the standard Opposition trap of pretending to like independent regulatory agencies, but at the slightest excuse he wants Ministers and politicians to rig the system, to fiddle it, to pull strings. That we will not do.

The water industry has had severe under-investment over the past 20 or 30 years. Privatisation solved that problem. Transferring the water industry to the private sector has given the industry the freedom to invest and to manage its investment programme in the most efficient and economical way. Necessary investment no longer has to be put off because of more pressing public priorities. The programme will involve expenditure of £28,000 million at 1989-90 prices in the present decade.

There were many doubts about whether such an enormous increase in capital expenditure could be achieved so quickly. Last year it is estimated that expenditure increased by a further quarter to £3·1 billion, improving on the planned levels. That investment is more than double the total retained profits of all the companies put together.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: On the question of past investment, will the Minister accept the figures which have oft been quoted in the House that the average investment in the water industry under the last Labour Government was £1,254 million per year and the average investment pre-privatisation under the Conservative Government was £922 million per year? That is a fact.

On the cost of capital, will the Minister say clearly whether he accepts the statement of the Director General of Water Services about the balance between equity and debt? Does he accept the questions posed by the director general in his paper on the costs of capital, which showed that if the financial regime of the water companies were different, investment could be provided at a lower cost to consumers?

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Lady is always scrabbling around for statistics to try to justify the huge cuts that the last Labour Government had to make in their investment programme. She has to rake over history to try to justify their position. I accept that under all Governments investment in the water industry was not good enough, but at least we had the sense to recognise that only through privatisation could we achieve the massive level of investment that we require. The hon. Lady is now trying to suggest that if the water industry were restructured, there would be more investment. The hon. Lady's policy is to

take public control of the water industry. I shall not take lessons from her on how to raise investment for a privatised water industry when it is her policy to take control of it.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclean: No, I want to make some progress.

I have said that our investment in the water industry has been £28,000 million. That is a magnificent achievement by any standards. It is an indication of the Opposition's lack of confidence in the subject matter for today's debate that they cannot acknowledge that, but simply try to pooh-pooh it.

Mr. Nicholls: I acknowledge everything that my hon. Friend has said so far. Will he reflect on a particular difficulty that has arisen in the west country? Because that area has far more coastline than any other water authority, about 2 per cent. of the population are supporting 10 per cent. of the nation's coastline. Does my hon. Friend agree that, although it is understandable that that consequence could not have been foreseen, now that water charges are to rise well in excess of 15 per cent. for the next five years and for the foreseeable future it will require a unique solution and may have to be dealt with by central funding? My hon. Friend is aware of the representations that I have made to our right hon. Friend the Minister. Can he comment on it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. That is far too long for an intervention.

Mr. Maclean: I understand my hon. Friend's concern because of the problems that have arisen in the west country. I hope that the Director General of Water Services will be able to look at this carefully when he reconsiders the K factor to see whether a unique solution can be found. However, although I accept that those circumstances are special, the west country is not unique. There are problems in other parts of the country. The Anglian Water area has the unique problem of high levels of nitrates in the water, and a considerable amount of investment needs to be made to remove those. In the north-west, cleaning up the Mersey basin requires billions of pounds of investment. That must be funded locally. Each area has particular, unique and special circumstances which require water charges to rise to pay for cleaning up the local environment.

I mentioned the magnificent investment records of the privatised water companies. The Government made that possible, but the private water companies and their managers have risen to the challenge. The Opposition are always telling us how much importance they attach to investment—although not today, of course—and especially investment to improve the infrastructure. The performance of the water industry stands comparison with the rest of the private sector, and with the best of the private sector.

The total investment being undertaken by the industry represents more than 50 per cent. of turnover, compared with large market leaders such as ICI, BP and RTZ, whose investment as a proportion of turnover is less than 10 per cent. If I remember rightly, the hon. Member for Dewsbury quoted Pilkington's, which has one of the better investment records—10·5 per cent.—yet the water industry invests more than 50 per cent. The Opposition seem quite unable to recognise a success story when they see one. They want to manipulate, to meddle and to rig controls which would prevent such essential investment.

Before the election, we heard much from the Opposition about an investment plan to kick-start the economy. My hon. Friends will remember the £1 billion that was to be the salvation of our industry. Let me tell the Opposition that the water companies invest that amount every four months.

I will give the House some examples of the projects now being built throughout this country. In the north-west, £100 million has been spent at the Davyhulme works in Manchester. That much-needed modernisation will bring improvements to the Mersey and Manchester ship canal.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclean: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman from Cumbria at the end of this section. If he listens carefully he might hear some news about his area.

When the London ring main is completed, it will deliver 285 million gallons of water daily to 6 million people in London. It will replace inadequate water mains, which far too often have burst and disrupted traffic, and it will enable supplies to be switched, as necessary, between the Thames valley and the Lea Valley. When completed, it will have cost £250 million and be 50 miles long.

Thames Water is spending £450 million on treatment plants to improve the quality of drinking water. North West Water has already completed, or will shortly complete, five major plants in east Lancashire at Cowpe, Laneshaw, Mitchells House, Loveclough and Ashworth Moor near Rochdale.

In Cumbria, North West Water is spending £6 million this year on two projects that, in total, will cost more than £30 million to improve water quality at Barrow-in-Furness.

Across Yorkshire, water investment is proceeding apace to provide the improvements that customers are demanding. Yorkshire Water is spending £25 million on an incinerator in the Calder Valley to dispose of sewage sludge. It will have the lowest gas emission performance in Europe—the highest standards in Europe.

In the constituency of the hon. Member for Dewsbury and surrounding areas, Yorkshire Water is spending £71 million on water quality and £35 million on security of supply. In addition to the Calder Valley incinerator, Yorkshire is spending more than £50 million on improving sewage treatment standards. It has entered into a contract with ICI to treat effluent through ICI's Huddersfield works. That is a substantial investment for a small part of Yorkshire Water's operational area.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister was pressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) on the need to borrow money to fund all these commendable projects, which we support because we welcome this investment. Why do not the water companies borrow more money as against raising it from consumers, who in these difficult times cannot pay the increases? Why do not they simply borrow more on the markets, as normal business men do?

Mr. Maclean: Once again, the hon. Gentleman betrays the Opposition's irresistible desire for politicians to tell companies how to operate. He asks why we do not tell the water companies how to raise their finances.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I only asked.

Mr. Maclean: And I have given him the answer—they must judge how to fund their investment. They can borrow if they wish. Our water industry's investment programme is second to none, and it must be funded. I regard it as perfectly acceptable that consumers should pay a major share of that investment.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Does the Minister have an opinion on the document issued by the Director General of Water Services on the cost of capital?

Mr. Maclean: I have opinions on many documents, including those issued by the Opposition. The point is that we have set up independent and tough regulatory machinery. I am not in the business of second-guessing or criticising our regulators.

I give another example—

Mr. John Marshall: My hon. Friend mentioned the London water ring main being built by Thames Water. Will he join me in congratulating Thames Water on the fact that the project is ahead of schedule?

Mr. Maclean: I should be delighted to do so, but my hon. Friend should not assume that that is a unique achievement—many of the investments by water companies are ahead of schedule. They are pressing on apace, and I look forward to being present at the opening of many more sewage and water treatment works and watching investment take place for the benefit of the consumer.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax) *rose—*

Mr. Soley *rose—*

Mr. Maclean: I must make some progress. I have have already given way many times.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) mentioned Thames Water's investment. Thames Water is investing nearly £400 million a year, and there are a considerable number of other investments across the country which I do not have time to mention now.

Mrs. Mahon: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is not it a custom of the House that when a Minister mentions one's constituency, he usually has the courtesy to give way? The Minister mentioned the Calder Valley and Calderdale, and Halifax is right in the middle.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Maclean: I thought that I had been very generous in giving way. I gave way four times to the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), although I did not intervene in her speech.

My hon. Friends will want to know how British contractors and British plant manufacturers are benefiting from the investment. It is all very well to quote the figure of £28,000 million but it represents work being done by our constituents across the country and investment by British firms.

The National Economic Development Committee for the construction industry made a special analysis of the situation and confirmed that British contractors and plant manufacturers have benefited considerably from the programme. For example, John Brown Engineering, Trafalgar House Construction and John Laing are benefiting and playing their part in the provision of new infrastructure. I should like to know how many tens of thousands of jobs are dependent on those construction projects, the ones that the Opposition are pooh-poohing.

What is the £28,000 million being spent on?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: How wonderful.

Mr. Maclean: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that it is wonderful, he should tell the hon. Member for Dewsbury so that she can praise it occasionally.

What is the money being spent on? What benefits is it bringing to customers and consumers? In the years to 1995, forecast expenditure in the water industry will be £17·2 billion. Better treatment of drinking water accounts for £2·5 billion of that money. That accords directly with the priorities of customers. In the recently published survey carried out by MORI for the Office of Water Services, 98 per cent. of customers thought it essential or very important that tap water should be safe to drink.

Mrs. Mahon: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclean: That is what the money is being spent on. A further £3·9 billion is to modernise and renovate water distribution systems. There is no point in sending out clean water from the treatment works unless it reaches the customer through clean pipes. Renovation also reduces leakage. New water resources and other works will account for another £1·8 billion.

An even greater proportion of the programme—£9 billion—is accounted for by renovation and repair of the sewerage system. That includes £2·4 billion for building new sewage treatment works and for improving existing ones.

Mrs. Mahon: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclean: No.

Mr. Soley: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclean: I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Soley: The Minister has been generous in giving way and I am grateful. The debate should be about the quality of service as we are talking about a monopoly supplier. What troubles us is the issue of sewerage and I will give an example from my constituency. In my constituency, pipes apparently come near the surface and cause backflows in heavy storms such as we have had recently. There are at least half a dozen houses in which the basements have been flooded with sewage, one on three occasions. This is why they trouble the Minister on the issue. Why is the answer from Thames Water that it cannot even provide help-line advice? It says that it can provide no compensation, that it cannot pump out the sewage, and that it cannot do anything. If British Gas were involved, one could get something done.

I have constituents who are literally ankle deep in sewage in their living rooms because the pipes are too near the surface. All they have been told is that they should ensure that they insure against such an event in future. Will the Minister give the House a commitment that he will check with all water authorities to ensure——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This intervention is too long. I make a plea to the House. Many hon. Members want to contribute. Interventions are acceptable, but they should be short.

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Gentleman raises a good point which goes to the heart of the investment programme about which we are talking. There is a huge backlog of work which needs to be carried out on sewerage systems throughout the country. Thames no doubt has its priorities. Providing the London ring main for fresh water is one of the top priorities. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman an assurance because I should not want to interfere or to direct Thames into priorities that I as a politician would impose. Thames must service its customers and that is what Ofwat is there to ensure. I hope that as it clears the backlog of its major works and priorities, Thames will be able to direct attention to other important problems.

I am not surprised that we need to spend an enormous amount on sewerage and sewage treatment. The amount is substantially more than needs to be spent on water supply. Vital though it is, sewerage has been an invisible and unappreciated service—unless and until something goes drastically wrong. As a more responsible attitude to the environment develops and spreads, the old attitudes are changing. In the MORI survey, 88 per cent. of customers said that it was essential or very important to have sewage treatment to EC standards.

I emphasise that much of the expenditure is needed so that the United Kingdom can comply with EC legislation, and rightly so. By 1995, £2 billion will have been spent by water companies to achieve compliance with the standards in the EC drinking water directive. We have accelerated our programme to achieve compliance with the bathing water directive and to bring the great majority of bathing beaches into compliance by 1995. The total cost in England and Wales until 1998 will be £2 billion.

In this area, as in all others, improvements must be paid for. The Opposition always seem to fail to grasp that point. They want control of the water companies——

Mrs. Mahon: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclean: I want to make this point. The Opposition want control of the water companies. They would either buy them back at the market cost of £8 billion or they would carry out the sinister threat of the hon. Member for Dagenham, who said:

"A Labour Government would take action to regulate the water industry which would reduce the profitability of the privatised water companies and, therefore, would be likely to depress the share price."

Another option trailed by the Opposition is to "take control", without spelling out what that means. We have not heard a single word from the Opposition today about what they mean by "taking control" or "taking over" the companies. Whether that distorted thinking prevails, or the hon. Lady's, at election time, the Government, in either scenario, would have to find the £28 billion for investment and Labour Members are now telling us that they hate the thought of the PSBR rising. The £28 billion investment programme is the equivalent of £130 a year for every household in England and Wales, which is more than £67 million per day, or more than £5,000 per minute of every day, for 10 years. In the time that the hon. Member for Dewsbury was speaking, the water companies invested £235,000.

The water companies need to make profits to finance that programme. The Director General of Water Services, Ian Byatt, recognised that when he published his annual report in June. He said:

"Many customers criticise the profits made by water companies . . . It is important that the companies should be profitable otherwise investors will not provide the funds essential for the completion of the £28 billion investment programme. Our surveys show that customers want safe, clean drinking water and clean rivers and beaches. Over 70 per cent. of these profits are reinvested in the water business to achieve this."

The Opposition have again ignored that point today, concentrating instead on bosses, salaries, no doubt believing there are votes to be gained in the process. We have always made it clear that salaries are a matter for the shareholders and that the best people are needed to manage that huge investment programme, but that companies cannot expect the workers to exercise restraint unless management does so likewise.

Before the Opposition get totally hooked on knocking the water companies, they should remember that more than 50 per cent. of water workers own shares and benefit from the enterprise they work in. Total investment last year is estimated to have been twice the companies' pre-tax profits. That is an exceptionally high proportion by any standard.

Mrs. Mahon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclean: I want to make progress. I have been generous in giving way.

If the hon. Member for Dewsbury does not want water companies to make and spend those profits, which elements of the investment programme does she want to sacrifice? Does she want raw sewage to go into the sea? Does she want us to continue to dump sewage sludge at sea? If she wants to freeze water bills and profits, what schemes would she cancel—which of the 595 on-going projects in South West Water area, which of Anglian Water's 210 sewage works that are being improved? How about the Severn Trent £20 million scheme at Stoke Bardolph, which is an investment of £40 for every adult and child in the Nottingham area?

Perhaps she would have stopped the £30 million refurbishment of the Knostrop sewage works in Leeds— [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I am grateful to the Opposition. They do not want to cancel any of those things. Of course not. The hon. Member for Dewsbury is always berating us for not doing things faster. The Opposition seem incapable of grasping the confusion and contradiction of their position. Without those necessary profits, there would be no investment in the first place.

Benefits have to be paid for, but the hon. Member for Dewsbury begrudges the margin needed to attract the necessary funds, which would have to be found from the consumer to raise the funds, if it were a public sector investment, as she wants, and if the water companies were taken into public ownership.

Of course water charges are increasing in order to pay for that investment. Charges are planned to increase by 63 per cent. in real terms by the end of the century, because that is the only way to pay for the improvements that the public have clearly said that they want and expect. There is no secret about the increase—it was set out clearly in the prospectus issued for privatisation—but the figures are not carved in stone. They are liable to change if the relevant circumstances change.

The House should remember that when we are considering proposals for further environmental improvements, and new European Community environmental legislation, we must not fall into the trap of thinking that

[Mr. Maclean]

every possible environmental improvement is costless of, at least, easily afforded. Sooner or later, hard choices will have to be made. We are certainly not making light or the increases that are necessary in water charges or the difficulties they may, perhaps, cause for a small minority of customers.

The fact that water charges are increasing may well have contributed to the increase in complaints about water companies received by the director general, and, possibly, to the rise in disconnections of customers, which he has reported. *[Interruption.]* I shall come to that matter later.

Bills must, of course, be paid. The power of companies to disconnect customers must remain as a legitimate last resort to deal with those who do not pay their bills. It would be entirely wrong that people who pay should have to subsidise those who do not. In fact, a substantial proportion of customers disconnected, almost three quarters, are reconnected within 48 hours because the bill has subsequently been paid or arrangements made for the arrears to be paid by instalments. Almost 10 per cent. of disconnections are made to households that have "gone away" leaving unpaid debts for others to pick up. For the small minority, who have genuine difficulty in paying, the director general is encouraging companies to review and improve their procedures to ensure that every possible assistance is provided.

It is hardly surprising that the number of complaints to Ofwat should have increased because this is the first time that the water industry's customers have had an independent regulator to whom to complain. He has set out deliberately to ensure that customers know that they can refer their complaints to him and that they can be sure that they will be listened to. We have published a citizens charter, which encourages them to expect and demand higher standards of service. We are proud of that. Consumers are taking advantage of that opportunity. The complaints naturally cover a whole range of matters, but about 63 per cent. of them are about charges or billing.

The same MORI survey for Ofwat shows that 80 per cent. of customers are satisfied with the overall service that they received. I am certain that companies want that percentage to be higher and will take steps to achieve that.

Yet another success of the system we introduced in 1989 is the framework of independent regulation of the industry. We saw that at work yesterday. The National Rivers Authority—NRA—is exerting its influence, and, if necessary, its authority, to protect rivers from excessive abstraction. The water companies—indeed, ultimately the water consumers concerned—may find that painful.

Mr. Michael Ancram (Devizes): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for being more generous in giving way than the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) was when I tried to intervene in her speech. Does my hon. Friend accept that many Conservative hon. Members accept that the preservation of river environments is an important part of water usage and that we very much welcome yesterday's statement? I do not know what influence my hon. Friend has over the chairman of the NRA, but will he ask him to extend his review of rivers to include the River Kennet in my constituency? At present, it is at severe risk, but it is not included in the present list.

Mr. Maclean: I am sure that the chairman of the NRA will want to read this debate carefully. By the action that the NRA took yesterday, it has shown that it is a good independent regulator which can take the necessary action without any prodding, prompting or kicking from me or any other politician. We should leave such action to the good sense and judgment of the independent regulators. No doubt my hon. Friend will draw his concern to the chairman's attention.

Equally, the Director General of Water Services is a tough and independent regulator of prices. His influence has been seen in the way in which most companies have chosen to contain their price increases below their permitted K factors. It has been seen also in his proposals for reducing the allowance for the cost of capital. He has not hesitated to ensure that the water consumer is not disadvantaged by diversification by the parent companies. He has not hesitated to criticise where necessary. I am sure he will do so again—for example, when he publishes, in July, his overall review of the companies' annual results.

Opposition Members seem incapable of accepting that the framework is working as we intended. They want us to dictate to the independent regulators how to do their jobs. They cannot resist reverting to the failed policy of Government interference.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Maclean: I agree with the hon. Member for Dewsbury that water is an important national resource. In our climate, people tend to think that there is rather a lot of it and that it should be delivered free. The truth is that some parts of the country are very short of it. It costs a lot to deliver to EC standards, and even more to treat the sewage that we do not all like to think or talk about. All the water delivered to our homes is of drinking water standard, but only 2 per cent. is used for drinking, and each year our annual consumption of water increases by 1 per cent.

The Government take the view that we need a proper debate about the long-term management of our water resources. So we shall shortly issue a consultation paper which will look at the merits of water conservation and discussions for the management, custody, distribution and use of our water resources. I want to see a wide range of responses, not just from those areas short of water but also from areas which are perceived as having plenty of it. The Government will then consider action in the light of those responses.

Mrs. Mahon *rose*——

Mr. Maclean: I do not know where the hon. Member for Dewsbury gets the idea that the Government are backing compulsory metering. It is one option which will be considered in the consultation paper. The hon. Lady should not jump to hasty conclusions.

Because of the unavoidable increase in charges, the customers, the consumers, of a privatised water industry are benefiting from an unprecedented investment programme to raise standards of service and improve environmental quality.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Maclean: I have been generous in giving way to Opposition Members. I must make progress.

Mrs. Mahon: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclean: No, I am sorry. Having given way generously to Opposition Members, I have tried to restore the balance by giving way occasionally to my hon. Friends.

We have seen an unprecedented investment programme which has raised standards of service and improved environmental quality.

That investment is being managed by companies which, because they are subject to private sector discipline, are achieving progressively greater levels of efficiency and, therefore, economy. They are protected for the first time by powerful independent regulators in the form of Ofwat, the National Rivers Authority, and the drinking water inspectorate.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury fails to understand the concept of the drinking water inspectorate, which performs an audit inspection task of the water companies. I shall not prejudice its decision on the cryptosporidium case. It is a complex issue and any prosecution that it might wish to take would need to be very well founded indeed.

Water services in Britain are among the best in Europe, but water charges in Britain are among the lowest. They average only 46p per household per day for the combined cost of water supply and sewerage. That is the price paid by an average family of two adults and two children for the delivery of nearly 1,000 pints of water and taking away the same quantity of sewage. It is substantially less than the French, the Germans or the Italians have to pay for their water services. It is a penny a day more expensive than *The Times* or *The Daily Telegraph* but less than the cost of a cup of coffee outside this place. I reckon that that is a magnificent bargain, and as the benefits of privatisation are fully realised, it will become an even better bargain.

In the two months since their election defeat, Opposition Members have clearly not learnt from their mistakes. Their internal analysis document of their defeat said that Labour was seen

"as a party of the past"

with

"a set of negative and off-putting associations"

and

"too much baggage from the late 70s and early 80s to persuade people that they can really trust us".

In this debate, where they picked a subject to deflect attention from their present failings, they have merely highlighted their prejudices, which are deeply rooted in the past. They are still saddled with the renationalisation baggage that their union masters will not let them jettison, and they have shown why they still cannot be trusted. I commend the Government amendment to the House.

5.29 pm

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): I am disappointed in the Minister because he would not give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon).

Several organisations have asked me to speak in this debate, but it would be unfair of me not to look at the position in England and Wales. I listened carefully to the Minister when he spoke about privatisation and who the shareholders were. He said that 50 per cent. of the shareholders were workers in the industry but he did not say how many shares the workers had compared to managers and directors. That matter was a scandal and a national disgrace. Indeed, the privatisation of the water industry was the sale of the century.

I remember when we were debating the matter in the House in 1988. The Government sold the public assets of this country, worth £27 billion, and 435,000 acres of prime land. They sold land and property worth some £3 billion and made a profit of some £745 million. Various organisations warned us about that. My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) mentioned one of those organisations—the Central Council of Physical Recreation, which warned us about section 7 of the Act referring to relevant bodies. The relevant bodies turned a blind eye to the Central Council of Physical Recreation, which had been in operation for some 40 years. The relevant bodies defined in the Act include the National Rivers Authority, the water undertaker and the sewage undertaker. Section 7 has eroded the protection of access rights for the public since privatisation.

I was worried when the Government told us about French interest in British water supplies. Three French companies were interested in water and its treatment—Lyonnais, Generale and Saur—and that interest was shown for the first time in the deal between Trafalgar House and Saur. Three months after Saur and Trafalgar House had entered into a deal, the business was sold on to Generale at a vast profit.

The Council for the Protection of Rural England is still worried about the selling off of the Welsh valleys by private developers, who will rape the unspoiled landscape and sell it for a profit. That is what it is all about.

The high water charges are a national disgrace. The Minister has the nerve to stand at the Dispatch Box and tell us that this is about purifying water. Profits in 1988 were £745 million. In 1991-92, they are £1·5 billion. What an increase. By 1992-93, water companies are expected to show bumper profits of some £1·65 billion.

Mrs. Mahon: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way. He shows much more gallantry than the Minister. I shall help my hon. Friend, because I was trying to be helpful to the Minister when he was talking about the price of water. Those paying for the increased profits are people on benefits. I looked into the matter today and found that, in my constituency, people on income support, receiving as little as £66.60 a week, were paying more than £3 a week out of that benefit for water.

There have been massive increases in charges since privatisation and the Minister should be aware of the percentage of people's benefits being paid for water. I shall put my findings on the board for him. Those people are the real payers for the profits in the privatised industry.

Mr. Wray: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and glad that she has been able to make that point.

The Government have deceived the Scottish electors. During the general election campaign Conservative Members spoke of the privatisation of the Northern Ireland water industry, but did not mention the privatisation of the Scottish water industry. We know what there have been meetings between the Scottish Office and Ofwat about the possibility of privatising the nine regional and three island water authorities in Scotland by setting up six water companies, which will be hived off to private enterprise. Why has that plan not been discussed with us?

Why has there been no mention of the meeting proposed in the near future between Scottish Office officials and financial analysts from NatWest? The

[Mr. Wray]

Government mentioned nothing about that—indeed, they denied it in the Scottish press. The Scottish Office said that it had no plans to do so, but it is on record as planning to have such a meeting.

I have read the report produced by Strathclyde water committee three years ago that stated clearly that, if the waters of Scotland were to be privatised, £4 billion would first have to be invested in Scottish water to meet European Community standards. Strathclyde, one of the biggest regional water authorities, is on record as saying that it would have to spend £800 million over the next 15 years to bring its water up to EC standards.

The Transport and General Workers Union, the GMB, the Labour party, the nationalists and the Scottish people are all against privatisation of water. One reason we are against it is the number of disconnections that have taken place in England and Wales, where last year there were 21,000 disconnections, compared with 7,673 in 1990-91. How does that tally with what the Minister has to say? Complaints have increased to 10,635—a 130 per cent. increase. I would not be happy with such an increase if I had set up a water authority consumer protection service.

We are worried about water metering; we do not want the very food of life to be cut off from the people we represent—people whose only fault is poverty. It is a cardinal sin for water or electricity supplies to be cut off.

One of the major worries in Scotland involves the Greater Glasgow health board, which is now putting forward plans to regional authorities on the fluoridation of public water supplies. We are worried because we thought that the local authorities hired directors of water to treat water to make it wholesome, not to treat the people who drink the water. In 1975, we took the case to the Court of Session on moral, medical and legal grounds, and won. The matter was ruled ultra vires, and the Government had to introduce an Act to give permission to local authorities to fluoridate and mass-medicate the nation.

Mr. John Marshall: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wray: Once I have finished my speech, I shall give way.

We believe that fluoridation takes away the fundamental right of freedom of choice in medical matters. We have often asked the Government to state whether fluoridating public water supplies comes within the terms of medicinal products as defined by the Medicines Act 1968. Section 130 of that Act clearly states that any substance mixed with an element and administered to an animal or human being to prevent disease is a medicine—the disease in that case being dental caries. So fluoride in this case would constitute a medicinal product, and before a local authority could give its permission to put fluoride in the water the proposal would have to be passed by the Committee on the Safety of Medicines.

Under the Sale of Food (Weights and Measures) Act 1926, mixing fluorides with foodstuffs is prohibited. Incidentally, fluoride is a poisonous byproduct of an aluminium smelter's waste. When it enters the water, it does not become fluoride; it becomes acid. It then goes directly into the body, where I am told it is attracted to calcium and teeth. I did not invent the diseases with which fluoridation of water is associated—chronic fluoride poisoning and skeletal and dental fluorosis. Not being a medical man myself, I am worried by the differing views that we have heard on this subject in recent years.

I should like to repeal the Water (Fluoridation) Act 1985 if I ever have the chance to introduce a Bill. That would certainly be one of my priorities.

I hope that, after examining the privatisations of all our national resources, a Labour Government would take them all back into public ownership, to ensure that we take profits from the very few and distribute them to the many.

5.42 pm

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I commence by declaring an interest, as a non-executive director of a water company. It is high time we had the opportunity to discuss this industry. The fact that it has been attacked by the Labour party for being successful probably denotes an accolade for the industry. If so, that proves that we have come of age in two years—not an unreasonable track record.

The House will forgive me if I do not follow the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) and his analysis of the problems, as he sees them, in Scotland. I shall confine myself to the main issues related to the industry today.

I was disappointed that the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor)—perhaps typically—designed such an oddly worded motion. It talks of being "alarmed" at the record profits, record dividends and record salaries in the industry. I do not see why that should be a cause of alarm to the hon. Lady. She has always been extremely anxious that improvements should be carried out quickly, and that as many innovations as possible should be effected in the industry.

She was one of the first to say that there should be no derogation for sewerage systems in Yorkshire. She said that they should all meet the required standards by the due date. She was one of the first to welcome new European directives and to demand that they be instantly absorbed in our water industry. She would be the first to recognise that a huge onus has been laid on the industry since privatisation to deliver change as quickly as possible. That is why there is record investment leading to record levels of improvement. Record levels of improvement mean record levels of customer satisfaction.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: The hon. Gentleman mentioned his role with Yorkshire Water. Is he prepared to comment, where the Minister was not, about the director general's suggestion in the cost-of-capital paper? What is his view on restructuring the investment programme?

Sir Giles Shaw: I shall not give that view today, but I agree that all companies will have to adopt a considered approach to a review of capital investment. I remind the hon. Lady and the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who did not appear to recognise the fact, that, quite apart from capital investment out of profit, there is investment through large borrowings. Some £1·5 billion profit in the industry in 1991-92 contributed to an investment of £3 billion during that year. On average, 70 per cent. of profits are ploughed back into investment.

It is not correct for the hon. Lady or the hon. Member for Workington to assume that the consumer is carrying the load for capital investment. Consumers make a contribution to profit, a significant amount of which is

invested. Every company must ensure its creditworthiness, and the share price of a private utility reflects the company's worth, enabling it to engage in low-cost borrowing. Every board must review borrowing year by year and event by event, because it must meet its costs.

The Minister gave an admirable tour d'horizon of the way in which the industry is coping. I emphasise the speed with which the industry has to move. People say that borrowing can be spread over a long time, but the industry must meet deadlines for the implementation of entirely new standards for water quality, and that requires an enormous effort in a short time. Yorkshire Water has about 4,500 employees and it is therefore not huge in terms of manpower, but it is a high-quality company and needs significant resources in technical and qualified manpower to deal with contracting and sub-contracting, and must acquire the necessary talent speedily to develop the investment processes.

The privatisation programme was about the only way to develop the nation's assets above ground and subsequently below ground. Those are entirely different phases. Most companies are currently investing in above ground assets, such as sewerage works, reservoirs and treatment plants. However, as the Minister said, another great tranche of investment will be required for the review of underground assets, and I suspect that it will be beyond the £28 million programme of which he spoke. All those programmes must be skilfully managed to time, and above all to cost, and the water companies have shown themselves capable of achieving highly desirable results.

Since privatisation, there has been a real shift in price, and I entirely accept Opposition suggestions that that has brought hardship to some people. However, as the Minister said, the absolute price for water of 46p per household is not high. We and our fathers inherited the belief that water was not only a natural resource but was free and that delivery costs were absorbed by other commodities. The old domestic rating system was undoubtedly the vehicle for that, because it contained the water rate, which was not easy for the householder to determine. The rate element for sewerage has always been much higher than that for water.

We have a major task in taking the public with us while maintaining speed of development. We must ensure that the quality of service is satisfactory and appreciated and that people understand the necessity for the investment that has led to higher charges.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Can the hon. Gentleman explain the unfairness imposed by the very board on which he serves, whereby a single-person household has to pay three times as much as a neighbouring one comprising a family of six? That arises from the disgraceful way in which Yorkshire Water meters water. Does not that go against all the tenets of the hon. Gentleman's forefathers and foremothers, who provided water at an affordable price because they knew that it was good for the public's health?

Sir Giles Shaw: I accept the hon. Gentleman's conclusion that the public will ultimately have to accept that water is good value for money. In terms of the method of payment, obviously a range of alternatives is available. There is some metering, but the majority of domestic bills are still based on the old rateable values formula, which gives rise to much more grief than metering would in respect of the single owner-occupier.

I am sure that a correct method of charging will eventually be found, and that, after the immense rush of capital investment that has been made for the reasons that I gave, the price of water will stabilise at a level that is bound to be acceptable to the public.

The question of debt and disconnection was raised by the hon. Member for Dewsbury, as well as implied by the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright). Yorkshire has an Ofwat of its own, which states:

"We continue to be concerned at the numbers of people who experience difficulty in the paying of their water and sewerage bills . . . The number of domestic premises suffering disconnection in the region has continued to rise to a total of 1,931 in the year ending 30 September 1991. We have monitored the systems employed by the Yorkshire company and by Yorkshire Water before disconnection occurs, and are satisfied that the code of practice is being correctly applied."

Disconnection is a threat and a last resort. As the hon. Lady said, court action is involved—but that is prior to disconnection, as part of the process of ensuring that it does not occur without proper statutory backing. It is not necessarily something that stands in its own right.

Water prices are rising faster than inflation because the rate of capital expenditure is passing through an extremely rapid phase.

Mrs. Mahon: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that people on low incomes—£66 per week if they are a couple on income support, or £86 per week if they are a pensioner couple—suffer disproportionately because of rapidly rising water prices? They receive no rebate, and so pay a disproportionately high price.

Also, coming as I do from a local authority background, I find it difficult——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady should confine her intervention to one question. She asked one very fair question, but she cannot have two bites of the cherry.

Sir Giles Shaw: I accept the hon. Lady's point about the difficulty of making up the payments. There is a strong case for ensuring that water is encompassed by the benefits system in the same way as electricity and gas. I have strongly argued with the Department of Social Security that that should be so. Water is an essential service, as is power, heat, and light. The hon. Lady makes an important point, and I would certainly support efforts to win DSS recognition of it.

The scale of investment is high in national terms, and also in relation to Yorkshire Water. We are currently spending about £2·5 billion, and that figure is likely to increase by the end of the year, and by another £1 billion or so before the end of the current capital programme is reached. The capital programme is therefore roughly two thirds the size of the company's entire annual turnover. That is a substantial amount for a company to find.

Mr. Martlew: Surely Yorkshire Water is one of the authorities that cannot supply consumers with the water they require. Yorkshire has water shortages. What is Yorkshire Water doing about that?

Sir Giles Shaw: Fortunately, the management of Yorkshire's water resources is not a matter for me; I am a non-executive director. As the hon. Gentleman probably

[Sir Giles Shaw]

knows, the problem occurs in the Hull aquifers, and the present climate has caused a reduction in the water-bearing rock. The Yorkshire grid, however, transfers resources from most parts of the county to where they are needed, and water is currently being extracted from the River Derwent and sent to Hull.

Despite four years of exceptional weather of one kind or another, most parts of the country have succeeded in managing water resources. In the past, there has been insufficient investment in collection and storage, and probably insufficient examination of methods of moving water from one area to another. Such examination is needed now.

There is also the question of leakage of resources. I accept that there is an onus on the industry to reduce the amount of water that is wasted from the pipework, preferably to an insignificant level. Underground renovation on a huge scale will be needed, as the hon. Member for Dewsbury will appreciate; that will be part of the next phase of major capital investment.

Some companies have already managed to reduce leakage, however. Anglian Water, for example, has achieved a reduction from 22 per cent. to 18 per cent., and Thames Water a reduction from 25 per cent. to 18 per cent. That shows that the problem can be corrected, and I hope that it will be; but we should also recognise that a large proportion of leakage may occur on domestic customers' own premises, where ancient pipework is now porous.

Obviously, the regulator will determine the way in which the industry progresses. A review of the regulating formula is currently under discussion, and I have little doubt that debates such as this represent an element of the evidence that he will seek in relation to both prices and allowances. It is clear, however, that most companies have been able to make progress without applying the full increase allowed by the regulator, and that should be recognised as a mark in their favour.

The fact remains that the industry is in the early stages of renewing the nation's assets for the distribution, consumption and treatment of probably the most important substance that mankind can have. We should appreciate that we are blessed with an extremely high quality of water for household use—much of it not for drinking, but able to be put to the many other domestic uses that are possible in the modern dwelling. We have a world resource, and we have world standards of conservation to observe. Only a high-quality, profitable and well-managed industry can deliver that resource to our people.

5.58 pm

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): The core of the debate is the difficulty—nay, impossibility—of introducing any element of competition into a natural monopoly. I am disappointed to see not just that there are comparatively few Conservative Members but that they are not dressed in sackcloth and ashes for what surely must be the privatisation programme's one huge failure.

It must be apparent at the outset that the legislation has failed to distinguish between a natural monopoly and one that can be mitigated by competition. That was why I and my hon. Friends tabled an amendment which, sadly, has not been selected, relating to the organ grinder, the Minister, rather than the monkey, the director general.

In the 1989 legislation it was impossible to introduce a positive commitment to competition and the use of market mechanisms. Instead, it simply followed the Thatcherite path of negative opposition to public ownership of a public utility. Had the Government taken on board the rhetoric of competition and produced some realistic solution, we might not be having this debate. Instead, they were more concerned with selling off the family silver than providing effective consumer control.

Sadly, we cannot start again and it is already apparent from the contribution from Opposition Members this afternoon that although some now wish to do a U-turn, or perhaps a U-bend, there are others who wish to find some form of renationalisation, however prohibitive the cost.

We must now consider how some element of competition or, in default of competition, some form of effective regulation on behalf of the public interest, can be introduced into what otherwise will inevitably continue to be a monopoly.

Surely we can learn some lessons from the other regulators. Ofgas has referred the gas industry to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, but there has been no such reference, except on a minor issue, in the water industry. That might be a route to be explored. The Minister might wish to consider that.

Oftel has had some success in introducing an overall price cap and, perhaps even more important, in disaggregating the basket of charges and costs, looking at them individually. That would be a major benefit if it were applied by Ofwat to the water industry.

An extremely effective step would be if Ofwat were enabled to consider the range of connection charges, which vary enormously from one part of the country to another without apparently any rational basis.

Perhaps most important of all, Ofwat should be looking at the notorious standing charge which encourages households to use more water, which must be against all conservation principles. The average standing charge in the south-west in 1991-92 was £27·50, a not inconsiderable amount for such a low-income area. We certainly wish to abolish all standing charges for pensioners.

Mr. Nicholls: Even billionaire pensioners?

Mr. Tyler: Certainly, I do not believe that they should be excluded from such a benefit; nor, I understand, does the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Tyler: I shall not give way again on that point.

One way in which the director general could make a substantial difference is if he were permitted to transfer his consideration of charge increases, to look at them in terms of rate of return. The problem about a rate of return basis is that it is backward looking. It takes into account historic costs and demands, but the K factor looks forward to future demands and productivity improvements. It also has the disadvantage that it can be a disincentive to cutting costs and improved productivity. On balance we must agree that the K factor, if properly used, is more likely to be effective than a rate of return regulation.

What we could do is to ensure, as happens in the United States, that the process by which that regulatory decision

is taken is carried out in the open with the support and encouragement of consumers and consumer representatives, enabling the utilities to put their case so that future charges can be scrutinised in public. If there is a capital underspend, Ofwat should automatically be able to curtail the intermediate price increases.

There has been much discussion today about alternative methods of paying for water. Clearly a new method must be found before the current rateable values are disallowed in the year 2000. The proposed bands for the council tax will not prove an effective instrument. They will be a blunt instrument. But whatever advantages there are in metering in monetary and environmental terms, they must be set against the considerable difficulties that have been referred to this afternoon, if for no other reason than that the cost would be astronomical. The original estimate based on the Isle of Wight pilot area was about £4 million and the actual cost could well be £12 million. In those circumstances, we must analyse the present situation, not just wait for a new system of charging which we think would be a great deal better.

It was originally anticipated—this is what has changed since the original legislation was enacted—that the K factor would be a minus figure. As the Minister said in answer to the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), the changes that have taken place in those three years in terms of increased environmental responsibilities and, therefore, increased costs, have been so dramatic that it must now be evident to everybody that the basis of the original calculation is wildly out of date. The Act is no longer relevant.

That is also true of the way in which the drinking water inspectorate's role has changed dramatically. The inspectorate is still hidden in the bowels of the Department of the Environment. It has never instigated any prosecution or attempted any public exercise to ensure that we meet EC standards. There have been widespread failures in attempting to meet the EC standards.

It is anecdotal, but I am told that the pigs at the food and farming festival in Hyde park a few weeks ago refused to drink the tap water and water had to be brought from Harrods. They may not be the arbiters of taste, but there surely comes a point when we must consider carefully whether the effective regulation of water standards in rivers by the National Rivers Authority is not rather higher than the quality of tap water.

The problem is that the regime set up in 1989 is too inflexible. There are all sorts of examples that hon. Members can quote showing what has changed since then. In his latest report the director general says:

"The requirement to meet new environmental obligations, mainly the acceleration of the Bathing Waters Programme, announced by the government in November 1990 in order to meet European Community obligations has resulted in an increase in customers' bills in the South West this year of some 16 per cent., and will involve further heavy spending largely concentrated during the next three years. It is of concern that the estimates submitted to me by South West Water in October 1991 were considerably in excess of those made to the Secretary of State in October 1990."

The director general himself is not satisfied with the quality of information available to him in making his determination.

We need two major changes. Clearly we need legislation to increase the powers of the regulator to protect the consumer and, at the same time, we clearly need a recognition that there needs to be an injection of public and EC money to pay for the improvements that we all demand.

It seemed to be apparent—I hope that the Minister will make it abundantly clear when he replies—from the answer given to the hon. Member for Teignbridge that no further Government money will be available to help areas such as the south-west with its enormous new obligations.

Two weeks ago, in a minor dress rehearsal to the debate, I initiated an Adjournment debate. At the end of it, the Under-Secretary was asked a number of specific questions. As he has had time to consider them a little further, I hope that this afternoon I will receive more detailed replies than I did on that occasion.

I first asked whether he was satisfied with the powers available to Ofwat. On that occasion he seemed to be over-satisfied, but we have to wait and see. Secondly, I asked whether he was satisfied that the customer is adequately protected from excessive water charges. The Under-Secretary seemed to think that it was perfectly acceptable that the average household in the south-west was paying 62p per day for its water. We have heard today that the national average is 46p per day. That differential already calls into question whether it is a fair system of charging. When it is set against the average household income, 62p in the south-west is very high.

Thirdly, I asked the Under-Secretary whether he would reintroduce Exchequer support by way of equalisation to deal with problems such as those referred to by the hon. Member for Teignbridge—our long coastline and comparatively small resident population. He did not say no, but he did not say yes. This afternoon the Minister seemed to say that the answer was probably no.

Another question related to the eligibility of the privatised companies for public funds from the European Commission. I asked whether the Minister would ensure that the rural development fund of the European Commission was available to the privatised companies. He said yes, but he did not seem to accept that that would require a degree of additionality from Whitehall. I asked whether he was aware that Ofwat powers to prevent distracting diversification—such as, for example, into shareholding in television companies—were unacceptable to the public. There was no answer to that. Finally, I dealt with the issue of chairmen's perks. Today the Minister seemed to be unaware of or unworried by that.

Last weekend, a retired couple in my constituency aged 71 and 66 spoke to me. They live in a modest bungalow in Bude which, ironically, until recently was within a few hundred yards of a discharge point into the sea for raw sewage. They told me that their poll tax for two people was £530·34 and that their water charges for the current year are £510·92. That is the scale of the problem and hon. Members on both sides of the House must come across the same problems in their postbag and surgeries.

The Minister claimed today that the Act is working as the Government intended. Was that what hon. Members voted for and what they intended in 1989? We believe that the Act needs to be reviewed and overhauled urgently. If it is not, the water charges in this country will bear far too heavily on far too many people who simply cannot afford them.

6.13 pm

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): Like my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary I think that we heard just what we expected from the Opposition. In other words, they hear no good, see no good and speak no good. That will be the tenor of all that we hear during this debate from them because it is sour grapes on their part. What has happened in the water industry has been done by our Conservative Government for the good of the country. I want to speak up loudly and clearly for the water companies, especially Wessex Water.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): The hon. Gentleman probably owns it.

Sir Jim Spicer: I do not own it. If I played any part within that company, I would declare it. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that.

Wessex Water is a fine company and it has done a great job since privatisation. Since privatisation, 80,000 samples of drinking water have been taken every year and are subjected to over 1 million tests for purity. A total of 99·6 per cent. of the legally required tests complied with United Kingdom and European Community standards last year. One cannot do much better than that. There have been no water restrictions in Wessex since 1976 and I would give a pretty firm guarantee that there will be none this year.

In this decade, Wessex Water is committed to spending over £350 million on improving already high drinking water standards. A total of 98·2 per cent. of Wessex Water's sewerage treatment works meet compliance standards. Six years ago, that figure was 85·7 per cent. Bathing water standards are of great importance in a constituency such as mine. The figure for meeting compliance standards is up from 71 per cent. in 1987 to 92 per cent. last year.

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that Wessex intends to spend £70,000 to establish the life of a meter, when Welsh Water has already established that that life will be seven years? Does the hon. Gentleman think that that is a good way of spending money?

Sir Jim Spicer: Yes. In Wessex we are cautious people. We do not necessarily accept all that has been done in Wales. In fact, we take it with a pinch of salt. We want to do our own investigation. As the hon. Gentleman will know, we have already carried out the largest tests in the entire country on the Isle of Wight. So the hon. Gentleman should give some credit to Wessex Water for knowing a little more about metering than any other authority.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) is not present, because he raised the point about four or five properties being flooded with sewage. In Bridport, a town served by Wessex Water 24 terraced houses have faced flooding with sewage three or four times a year over the past 50 years. The people in those properties have lived in fear for all that time. I have been horrified and shocked over the years when, time and again, I have gone to the old nationalised company only to find that no work was contemplated.

Immediately after privatisation, I went to Wessex Water and said, "This will not do." That fear has now been lifted from those people. They have a marvellous scheme. Although the cost per household has been astronomical, Wessex Water felt that it was its duty to do what was required for those people.

I sometimes think that we spend our time in this country saying how dreadful we are. However, 90 per cent. of our rivers reach European Community standards compared, with 45 per cent. in the rest of the Community. We know the situation in that great city of Brussels. It does not even have a decent sewage works. It should get on to that and improve its standards dramatically.

From 1975 to 1979, I served on the Public Health Environment Committee of the European Parliament. That was in the heady days when we were passing resolution after resolution, regulations were being approved and the Commission was demanding higher air and water standards left, right and centre. At that time those of us in the Community lived in an ivory tower and agreed with all those regulations, because we believed that we should aim for total perfection within the Community. We believed that that was what it was all about.

However, with compliance figures now of 99·6 per cent. and so on, I wonder whether it is right and proper for us to search for that total perfection when we know what horrors exist outside the European Community. That 0·5 per cent. improvement within the Community would cost billions of pounds, always assuming that everybody did what they said they would do. Yet even a small fraction of that sum could be spent in eastern Europe, Russia or Africa and could produce so much more for our world and for us because we are part of that world.

My hon. Friend the Minister said that improvements must be paid for. By all means let us have improvements, and let all of us be prepared to pay for them, but let us not go for perfection at whatever cost.

Costs of £28 billion in this decade have been mentioned. Some people say that, if the flood of directives continues from the Community, with its constant searching for perfection, that figure could double. I beg Ministers carefully to consider what we are being required to do within the Community to see whether it is absolutely necessary. If we could transfer to the third world just 10 per cent. of the money that we shall spend this decade, all the promises that have been made at Rio would come true tomorrow. That applies to water, to air pollution and to every other aspect of our environment about which we are worried.

I am sick and tired of people who, on a heavy day in London, stick five or six checkpoints down Mile End road and then say "It is disgraceful; we have not got a high enough air quality." They should go to China, Africa or eastern Europe and see for themselves the conditions in which people are not living but dying and, despite all the problems that we must solve, contrast that with the unbelievable world of plenty and purity in which we live today. We do, after all, live in the same world.

6.21 pm

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I agree with much of what the hon. Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) said, especially towards the end of his speech. We are debating the effects of privatisation on our constituents.

In December 1988, in the Second Reading debate on the Water Act 1989, I said that privatisation would not work and that 80 per cent. of people opposed water privatisation and that it was the one privatisation measure

that they would not accept at any price. They were right then and are right now. No hon. Member believes that water privatisation was a vote winner for the Conservatives at the last election.

Mr. Knapman *rose*——

Mr. Martlew: I shall give way to the hon. Member, who mentioned me earlier in the debate, despite the fact that I had not spoken.

Mr. Knapman: I was with the hon. Gentleman on the Committee that considered the Water Bill. What privatisation has he ever supported?

Mr. Martlew: I make no apologies for the fact that I was not too worried about the privatisation of Cable and Wireless. If the hon. Gentleman is asking whether water should be taken back into public ownership, the answer is yes.

We have heard much today about the amount of investment that has been made in the industry. The same amount could have been invested under public ownership and, by cutting the profit margin, bills could have been reduced by a third. In Committee, it was said that privatisation would send prices sky high. That has happened. It was said that the service will worsen. That has happened. It was said that there would be a massive number of disconnections. That has happened. We said —there has been little mention of this by Conservative Members—that there would be water shortages in many parts of the country. That has happened.

Privatisation has made a national strategy for water impossible. If people in the south-east, who, funnily enough, tend to support the Government, but were more reluctant to do so at the last election, are without water it is not the fault of the Labour party. We would have been quite happy to ensure that water from the north and the north-west—the area that I represent, where there is plenty —was sent to people in the south. That will not happen now because of privatisation.

I represent Carlisle, and the Minister, the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean), represents a constituency in the area. Inflation is 4·5 per cent., but our bills increased 9 per cent. this year. No other company in the north-west, except Norweb, has been able to make such increases. There is no competition because the water authorities have a private monopoly. No company offers me an alternative tap in the bathroom. The House created a private monopoly without safeguards—a licence to print money. Any fool can run a company that has a monopoly in a product such as water. North West Water cannot go bankrupt, because without it the people of the north-west cannot survive. We created a money-making machine for the stock exchange and for shareholders.

The Minister defended the massive increase in the salary of the chairman of North West Water, which seemed reasonable to him. The chairman was not head-hunted; he did the job for about £54,000 before privatisation. He is now being paid £146,000 for doing the same job. That does not seem reasonable. In addition, he was given a share option worth £250,000. I understand why he favours privatisation.

Mr. Hall: I have a letter from a constituent who lives in Great Sankey, the headquarters of North West Water. He tells me that the chief executive has had a monogrammed carpet installed in his office. Is that what the profits of water companies should be used for?

Mr. Martlew: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for exposing what is going on with our money. I am sure that my constituents are not happy about lavish amounts of money being spent on carpets for a new privatised industry that was supposed to improve the service. The service has not improved. Complaints have increased by 130 per cent. I am sure that hon. Members receive more complaints about the privatised water companies than they did about the publicly owned companies. Admittedly, 50 per cent. of the complaints will be about the price of water, which is a major concern to my constituents.

It is nonsense to suggest that privatisation has helped to clean up our beaches. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border is not in his place. While he was in Rio, trying to wreck the world environment conference, a report was issued showing massive pollution in his own backyard on some of the beaches of the Solway. What hope have we of solving world pollution when the Minister cannot clean up beaches in his own area?

The hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) mentioned North West Water's plans for beaches in the area, but 23 of the 33 bathing beaches do not meet the EC's standards for bathing water. Seventy per cent. of beaches in the north-west are not up to standard. Privatisation has not helped.

Mr. John Marshall: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that since privatisation North West Water has invested £511·6 million, compared with £188·8 million five years ago? Is not that helping to solve the problems?

Mr. Martlew: I am well aware of the fact that the hon. Gentleman's party was in power five years ago and kept the water authorities short of resources. It brings nothing but shame on the hon. Gentleman to mention the Government's record. We know where the extra money is coming from—the consumers. Consumers in my area wonder why North West Water has investments in Malaya and Canada. We are worried that the money is being taken out of the area to be invested throughout the world.

Disconnections do not seem to bother Conservative Members who appear to be happy to continue a two-tier society and to create an underclass. We shall reap the whirlwind sooner or later. The number of disconnections has increased to about 22,000, which is approximately the number of households in my constituency. I wonder whether hon. Members know—and perhaps the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) might remember this fact, which we learned in Committee—that it is a criminal offence to give a cup or bucket of water to anyone who has had his water disconnected. We hope that there are enough compassionate people who will risk the threat of prosecution by ensuring that such people are provided with water.

I am not in favour of people not paying their bills, but the bills have become too large because the profits of the water companies are too high. There has been talk about water metering being a way to solve the problem, but compulsory water metering would be an appalling mistake. It is a system of rationing by price rather than by need. The rich would still water their gardens, buy

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dishwashers and fill their swimming pools. They would not be affected, but metering would have a drastic effect on the poor.

The money that we are talking of spending on water meters should be spent on providing a national water grid. That would make a lot of sense for areas such as mine. I hope that Scottish Members will not accuse us of stealing their water as they accused us of stealing their oil, but there is ample water in Scotland. It is ridiculous that we have no system of getting that water from the north and the west of the country to the south-east and to Yorkshire. A perfect example is the Kielder reservoir in Northumberland, which was built to feed the steel industry which has since declined. There are major water shortages in Yorkshire 100 miles to the south, but we could solve the problem if we could transport the water. We must consider the issue in a United Kingdom context, but, by privatising water, the Government have made that almost impossible.

We said that the Government were wrong about privatisation. We said that the people of this country would pay through the nose and that is what they are doing. The Government deny any knowledge of that—we heard from the Minister who said that it was nothing to do with the Government and that one must consult the regulator. The regulator is a waste of time. Anyone who has read any of its press releases will realise that it has very limited powers and uses them very rarely. The Government and the regulator have a Pontius Pilate attitude—they are washing their hands of a natural resource which is important to everyone.

6.34 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): First, I commend my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside for the way in which he opened the debate. He set the context in which all our contributions must take place.

For many years the water industry had been starved of investment. It was the one industry to which the Government could always look for the economies that they needed for more pressing demands. In the end, that had to stop. Whatever else I may say, I fully acknowledge that that process had to stop. It is clear from what the Minister said that massive sums of money are now available to be spent on investment in the water industry, and it is unrealistic to deny that.

I shall make a more local contribution and provide what might be described as a gloss on what the Minister said. Understandably, the Minister spoke about averages and the average cost of water to people in this country. The difficulty is that I do not represent the country—I am a west countryman born and bred and I represent a west country constituency, so my knowledge of the average is restricted to how it applies to my area and especially to my constituency.

In Teignbridge the average water charge is about £227 a year, but the west country has a curious feature—it is an area of comparatively low wages but comparatively high rateable values. That produces some interesting distortions. It means that when one goes out on the stump in the streets of Teignbridge, people will say that their water charges are now higher than their community charge. One cannot draw a simple correlation between the two and say that if one charge is higher than the other, it tells us something immutable, but the difference surprises many people. People in relatively average accommodation can pay more in water charges than in community charge.

There is no mystery about how that happens. The west country has more coastline but fewer water charge payers than any other area in the country. To pay for the coastal clean-up in the west country, the K factor combined with the rate of inflation means that the average west country water charge will rise for the next five years—and, realistically, for the indefinite future—by between 15 per cent. and 20 per cent. per annum.

Let me explain what that can mean in practice. As I said, in west country terms the average is a misleading figure, but on average the £227 per annum will amount to about £700 by the year 2000—and that is not very far away. It is a remarkable figure, and I am sure that many hon. Members will be surprised by it.

Certainly, the privatisation programme has been a success because it has produced £25 billion or £26 billion to spend now which should have been spent a long time ago. It would be unfair, though tempting, to criticise the Government for not being able to envisage the minutiae of policy in advance because that would be asking too much. However, having been shown how things have worked out in practice in a particular region, I do not think that it is too much to ask the Government to consider some fine tuning.

It is not the fault of the people in the west country that they have to clean up what is essentially a national asset. It is not their fault that people in Brussels are anxious to pass regulations which they know that we shall enforce because the good old Brits always play the game. It is not the fault of my constituents that people in Europe are far keener to impose obligations on other people than to meet those obligations themselves. It is not my constituents' fault, but they must cope with the consequences.

It would be tempting for the Minister—although it would not be in character—to say, "You have set out the problem, so you produce the solution." I am open to offers, but that is not my job. As a Back Bencher, it is my job——

Mr. Tyler *rose*——

Mr. Nicholls: I shall deal with the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

It is not my job to identify in every particular how one should solve the problem that I have outlined. As a Back Bencher representing my constituency, it is my job to bring to the House my experience of what needs to be remedied and then perhaps—

Mr. Tyler *rose*——

Mr. Nicholls: I shall deal with the hon. Gentleman in a moment—and then to suggest ways in which it might be possible to deal with the problem.

Mr. Tyler: Is the hon. Gentleman now saying that he made a mistake when he brought his experience to the House, to use his own words, and voted for the Water Act 1989? Or is he saying, as I said earlier, that the circumstances have changed since that Act and it should therefore be reviewed and amended?

Mr. Nicholls: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to what I said, he would not have needed to ask the question.

I will repeat briefly what I said, just for the hon. Gentleman. I accept that the policy has been successful. There can be no doubt about that. I am saying that in the light of experience we need to know when that successful policy has to be fine-tuned to take account of local circumstances which can now be seen in operation rather than merely being forecast. To take account of the extraordinary position whereby a tiny number of people are responsible for maintaining the nation's coasts, some sort of extra input is necessary, whether through Whitehall, through Europe or through a combination of the two. The problem needs to be addressed.

It is not such a unique problem. In the 17th century, Hampden went to court and said that he did not see why he should have to make a contribution towards ship money because he came from an inland area. He said that he was not troubled by pirates or by other such matters and asked why he should have to pay taxes to maintain the Royal Navy. He was told in no uncertain terms that the kingdom in those days was a seamless entity and that he, too, benefited from the security and safety of the coasts. Some things change over 300 years, but that does not.

We are entitled to say that there is an extra dimension at present which needs to be addressed. It is simply unfair and unrealistic to think that as time goes by a national asset will continue to be maintained on a local basis. We do not maintain the coastguards on a local basis, we do not maintain the Royal Navy on a local basis, and ultimately, we cannot maintain all the west country coast on a local basis.

Any debate, no matter how serious the subject, should have some light relief, and I pay full tribute to the hon. Member for North Cornwall, (Mr. Tyler) for providing that. It is extraordinary for the Liberal Democrats to come to the House and say, "We can solve it for you. We have worked out how to do it. Here is the macro-solution from the man from North Cornwall. He says that pensioners should not have to pay standing charges." That is a relief, is it not, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Already one can hear the thundering of feet as millionaires head towards North Cornwall. Doubtless the people in front will be the Dowager Duchess of Westminster and my right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Thatcher. They will all flood down to Cornwall, North now because they know that under Liberal Democrat policy the working poor in North Cornwall and Teignbridge will be responsible for paying their standing charges. That is an extraordinary proposition.

From time to time, it is rather nice to be a Liberal Democrat because the idea is that one does not have a record. In fact, the Liberal Democrats do have a record. The time when capital investment in the water industry was slashed was between 1974 and 1979, when it was reduced from £1·6 billion to £1·1 billion. Who kept the Government in power? The answer is the hon. Member for North Cornwall and his merry friends.

Mr. Tyler: After the Adjournment debate the other day, I had to point out that the Minister had his dates wrong. I think that the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) was not in the House at the time. My party did not support the Government at the time to which the hon. Gentleman refers. During the short period in which we supported the Government, there was an increase in capital investment in the industry. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will check with the Minister to see whether he has the correct date.

Mr. Nicholls: The record of the Liberal party in keeping the Labour Government in office is clear enough. It is a matter of record.

Mr. Tyler: That is not true.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman bawls from a sedentary position that it is not true. He was here briefly before and he will be here briefly on this occasion. He may care to check the facts. As time is short, I will not go through all the years in question. I merely point out that in 1974-75, the first year of the Labour Government, investment was £1·634 billion. By 1978-79, investment was down to £1·128 billion. Those are the facts.

It is puerile populism for the hon. member for North Cornwall to say, "If I cannot get the dowagers to deal with the problem, I have another idea." He talks about the salaries of the water authority chairmen. Yes, the salaries are large. Ridiculously enough—this is a slightly different comment—some of them earn more than the Prime Minister does. Is the hon. Gentleman going to go to the west country at the weekend and say that he can solve the problem for water charge payers by abolishing the salary of the chairman of the South west water authority? That would be literally a drop in the ocean compared with the present £2 billion capital investment programme.

It would be thoroughly unfair and unrealistic for me to say to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales that I expect him to come up with a blueprint to deal with the problems that I have set out. He knows, however, —he will have been briefed—that west country Members, of whom I have been in the forefront, have said to Ministers recently, "This is the way it is working out in practice." It would be asking too much of my right hon. Friend to demand that he should come up with a solution tonight.

The Opposition motion makes no mention of investment; instead it whinges on about perks. On the basis of the motion, there is no doubt which way hon. Members should vote. However, I hope that when my right hon. Friend the Minister replies to the debate we shall see the start of a process. I hope that he will at least acknowledge the effect of the problem on the west country. I hope that he will at least accept from me the feelings of outrage and indignation when people see how a successful policy affects them in a particular area. I do not expect my right hon. Friend to come up with a solution today, but an acknowledgement that there is a problem which must be addressed would be extremely helpful.

6.45 pm

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): The speech by the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) revealed some special pleading. The hon. Gentleman supported the principle of the organisation of the water authorities, yet when the shoe begins to pinch in terms of the hon. Gentleman's constituency, he asks for dispensation. There is a suggestion that the Government might come up with some redress, which is exactly the basis of our case.

This is my first speech in the House for 13 years, and my first speech as the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton. I am aware that such speeches are often not

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interrupted and that one has the opportunity to make some uncontroversial statements. It is unlikely that I shall be able to avoid making any controversial statements, and I do not mind if hon. Members intervene, if they help to advance my argument.

I have always thought that we needed a powerful political campaign to destroy three political metaphors. The first, which is constantly used by hon. Members of all parties, is that we need a level playing field. Any sportsman can tell us that a level playing field is not needed for any sport. If the field is tilted, one normally plays against the conditions in one half and with them in the next half. I have never understood why people, especially politicians, think that a level playing field is such an advantage. I say that especially as the parliamentary football team played on a level playing field today and lost 3-0 to the Press Gallery, our old enemies. It did not do us much good.

The second phrase that I should like to see abolished from the parliamentary lexicon is the "kick start" to the economy, which the Minister used earlier in the debate. The phrase reflects a time when the motor bike industry was British-owned. We persisted with the kick start while the Japanese exported motor bikes with electronic ignition, which wiped out the motor bike industry in Britain. I have never understood why Conservatives suggest that there can be industrial recovery through a kick-start mechanism, as kick starts are an outdated technique.

The third phrase, which I should especially like to abolish, is used when referring to hon. Members who return to the House for a different constituency after a lapse of time. They are referred to as "parliamentary retreads". I think that the phrase was conjured up by my dear friend Andrew Roth, who is responsible for the pen portraits which appear so often in his books. The phrase gives an image of burnt-out rubber, of someone who is decayed and of limited second-hand value, and of limited service to a constituency. I propose that those of us who are privileged to come back to the House after a lapse of time should henceforth be referred to as "recycled" Members. It makes us sound greener, environmentally friendlier and of greater value to society. That is how I should prefer to be identified.

I am exceedingly proud of my new constituency. I am proud of the fact that Oldham and the adjoining town of Royton were the cradle of the industrial revolution. The mills that Blake referred to as "dark" and "satanic" were constructed in Oldham, but I pay tribute to the architecture of the past. Much about those mills has stood the test of time. They were well built, many were extremely light, and they provide excellent premises for new industrial enterprises, of which we have a range in Oldham and Royton.

Industrial and domestic catering machinery is now produced in one of those mills. Ferranti operates from the Cairo mill in my constituency, whose name everyone will recognise, as it had such great significance for the cotton industry. Ferranti carries out the highest level of technology in a building which is more than 150 years old. There is a danger that Ferranti may transfer its processes elsewhere, and I make a plea that the Ferranti board's decision should be in favour of Oldham and of maintaining work there for my constituents.

Oldham was not only the cradle of the industrial revolution but of parliamentary democracy because the constituency was created to redistribute political power from the south to the north of England—to give working people in the new industrial towns of the north some representation. Although the Reform Act 1832, proved to be a great disappointment to so many working people—especially in Oldham, where the Chartist movement was inspired as a protest that the Bill did not go far enough to enfranchise them—it was a significant redistribution of power from the south to the north. That balance still has to be redressed.

Oldham succeeded in giving some powerful political voices to this country. The first two Members of Parliament were William Cobbett—he of "Rural Rides", who identified the needs of the poor—and Henry Fielden, who would not have commended himself to the Conservative side of the House. He was in favour of restricting the working day to 10 hours. He was the predecessor of those arguing within the European Community and on the Opposition Benches for some restriction of the working week, which the Conservatives choose to oppose. Those two men portrayed the horrors of laissez-faire and of the free market capitalism of their day. How they would shudder at the impact of Government policies today, especially on the community that they represented.

Many of my constituents are finding life tough during the second recession in little more than a decade, and the water industry is not making their lives any easier.

Before I identify the water industry's abuses and its depredations on my constituents, I must pay tribute to my immediate predecessor, James Lamond, who was the Member of Parliament for Oldham, Central and Royton for 22 years. James was essentially a modest man, although he was proud to be in the tradition of Cobbett and Fielden, and of the radical Winston Churchill, who represented Oldham at the beginning of this century. However, James would never have put himself in that category. He took great pride in the fact that he represented his constituency well, and he was greatly respected there and in the House.

I have no doubt that the people of Oldham and Royton greatly miss their former Member of Parliament, who presented strong views, which were not entirely uncontroversial. I did not entirely share his view of the virtues of the state centralist planning of the Soviet Union, a country which he visited many times. However, he was historically accurate when he argued in the House that a massive vested interest—aggressively represented on the Conservative Benches and in the wider western world, especially the United States—greatly exaggerated the Soviet threat to our position in Europe. He argued that the military industrial complex of western Europe had a vested interest in dramatising the Soviet Union's power, which was much weaker than it was portrayed.

I do not think that there is any doubt that history has proved that the Soviet Union never possessed the power, even if it may for a short time have had the will, to carry out imperial adventures against western Europe. James Lamond was right to argue that the archaic industrial regime that was the Soviet Union had a limited capacity to cause the sort of damage predicted.

James was not only a critic of the Government's strategic policy on east-west relations. He was a master of the short, sharp question, which permits less evasion by Ministers and is therefore more effective, although it is

deployed all too rarely in the House. He was also a master of the sedentary intervention, which is a more difficult art form. With his strong Aberdonian accent, he could be heard all over the House, and successive Speakers and Deputy Chairmen were somewhat tolerant of his caustic wit, which often caused Ministers to reply.

He also served as a member of the Chairmen's Panel, and I believe that he chaired sittings of the Water Bill, so it is right to mention him in this debate. In his constituency, he was regarded as the most considerable and helpful of Members of Parliament, and during the two years that I have campaigned in my locality, I have been told that I shall do well to match him. I shall certainly try.

First, I shall try to defend my constituents against the rapacity of private exploitative monopolies, created by this Administration. This is a debate about water, but today the North Western electricity board, has announced that its profits doubled last year. Who can provide an alternative competitive mechanism to contrain that exploitation of ordinary people? Water is an equally grim example.

How does the party that talks of the virtues of laissez-faire, which has a so-called think tank called the Adam Smith Institute—the party of Sir Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher—justify that private monopoly power? Surely Adam Smith made it clear in the 18th century that consumers would be exploited if private monopolies were created. Surely 19th-century economists—those patron saints of the Tory party—emphasised that too.

Is it not the case that, in the 20th century, Hayek and Milton Friedman pointed out the dangers of monopoly power? It is true that those economists often railed against the state, but at least its monopoly power is answerable to the people. It is answerable in the House, whereas the Minister is disavowing any responsibility for the strategies pursued by the water authorities.

The water companies are monopolies with a captive market. They will set out to make excess profits, and it will be difficult to deter them. That is what has been going on. Since privatisation, the excess profits of all the water companies have increased substantially, especially those of North West Water.

Even in the midst of the bleakness of recession, when all our manufacturing industry is going to the wall, when virtually no one can make a decent profit and all our enterprises are suffering, the public utilities are coining money because of their monopoly position.

What else did we expect from exploitative monopolies but that the people at the top would be the beneficiaries of their exploitative power? Have not the chairmen and key executives of the companies benefited from water privatisation in a way that no one else could conceive of doing? How can Conservative Members justify it when a man doing a job earns one rate in one year and, three years later, triples that salary? It is claimed that that is somehow related to his performance, but his earnings are related not to performance but solely to the exploitative powers of the water companies.

How are such increases paid for? Labour Members know the answer, and some Conservative Members are beginning to appreciate it, too. Prices have gone up by more than three times the rate of inflation. Since privatisation, prices have risen by 41 per cent. in the north-west.

What has been the corollary of the increase in prices? It has been the staggering, shameful growth in disconnections. Should an industry that provides such an essential commodity to our people see the number of disconnections rocket into the thousands this year because people cannot pay for the supply of water that they need? Where will price increases end? North West Water has begun to charge fell runners for the use of land that it controls.

How will the national grid for water operate? What will Conservative hon. Members ask of North West Water, which is replete with resources, given the average rainfall on Old Trafford and on points to the north and west of it? What will happen when the drought-ridden lands of southern England make a supplication to North West Water for the transfer of water resources? Will North West Water charge the exact market rate? Will it exploit consumers in southern England by charging them through the nose for the water supplies that they desperately need? We cannot have a rational policy for the distribution of water in this country, despite the growing anxieties expressed in constituencies in southern England, while we leave the powers of the northern water companies unfettered.

It will be necessary in the short term, before we can do anything more dramatic when the Labour party comes to power again, to strengthen the power of Ofwat, the regulatory body. By our scrutiny of its role, we must insist that the water companies are more answerable to our constituents. Labour hon. Members must harry and harass the Government, who have created the exploitative monopolies, so that they answer the case.

7.2 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I congratulate the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) on his inaugural speech as the Member for that constituency. I know that he was highly regarded when he was in the House before, and I am sure that he will make a great success of representing his constituency.

I also support the tribute the hon. Gentleman paid to his predecessor, because Jimmy Lamond and I served on Aberdeen town council many years ago. He was known there as an effective debater and as a man of principle. He was highly regarded by members on both sides of the civic chamber. When I joined the House, I was not surprised to find that he was also highly regarded here. In Aberdeen we had a civic toast—the toast of Bon Accord—which went "Happy to meet, sorry to part and happy to meet again." I am sure that the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton and other hon. Members would be happy to drink that toast to Jimmy Lamond.

I was interested to hear the hon. Gentleman say that we no longer have a British motor car industry. When he was previously in the House, the Meriden co-operative existed, which was financed by large amounts of public money. There is a lesson to be learnt from that—one cannot pour large sums of public money into a venture and assume that it will be a success.

It has been an interesting debate and some Labour Members have said that they would renationalise the water industry. Let them remember that that would mean spending £8 billion to buy the shares back and that they would be forgoing hundreds of millions of pounds of

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revenue in corporation tax. Let them remember that that would mean a vast increase in expenditure on investment, which would be paid for by the taxpayer.

The first contribution from the Opposition Back Benches came from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray), which was particularly interesting because Scottish Labour Members always tell us that English Members should not speak on Scottish issues. This debate relates to England and Wales and, therefore, it was surprising that a Scottish Labour Member should seek to trespass on our issue.

We then heard a typical speech from the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler), who has now disappeared from the Chamber. He spoke of the need for a new method of paying for water, but, as so often happens with the Liberal Democrats, the nature of that new method was not described to the House. No doubt it will be revealed two days after the next general election.

When I was told that we were to have a debate on water, I thought that it would be a debate of congratulation. I thought that we would congratulate the water industry on doubling its investment since privatisation and on spending more money in investment than it has made in profits. I thought that we were going to congratulate Thames Water, which has invested £1,200 million compared with profits of £700 million. I thought that we would congratulate the water industry on having better standards than those of the European Community, and that we would congratulate it on the level of water charges. The average water charge is 46p for each household per day—less than the price of a loaf of bread.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): God knows where the hon. Gentleman buys his loaf of bread.

Mr. Marshall: I am afraid that I do not go to Food Giant to buy my bread. It may cost less in Food Giant, but in many shops a loaf costs more than 40p. The cost of water is well below the price of a pint of beer, and I know which gives better value for money. In the area covered by Thames Water, which supplies Hendon, the average price of water is only 40p per household per day.

When we debated the privatisation of water in 1988, there was general agreement that the standard of our beaches was too low, that our rivers suffered from excessive pollution, that the quality of drinking water in Britain was not as high as we would have liked and that the problem of water shortage needed increased investment. The only difference between the two sides was in trying to find a solution to the problems. Our opponents said that the then structure of the water industry had led to all of the problems, but what did they intend to do? They did not intend to change the structure of the industry. Although they said that the problems had been caused by the structure of the industry, they said that they would solve them by keeping the industry in the public sector.

Conservative Members recognised that the water industry's failure resulted from a lack of investment. In any public expenditure round, the water industry, if in the public sector, had to compete for resources with hospitals, schools and transport. It never did very well. The water industry had to be privatised so that it could tap the resources of the market.

Today's debate has revealed the Labour party's paucity of thought. It said that, under public ownership, the water industry had failed the nation, but what does it say now? It says that the industry should be returned to public ownership—no doubt to fail the nation a second time. No wonder that, the other day, *The Times* said that the Labour party has no new thoughts and that anyone looking at the House from the outside would think that the real Leader of the Opposition was the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I began to fear that the hon. Gentleman would become a cult Establishment figure and lose his traditional role.

Opposition Members live in a fool's paradise. They think that we can have increased investment without somebody having to pay for it. Individual water companies have an excellent record. Anglian Water's investment in 1989-90 was £190 million. The projection for 1993-93 is £380 million, double the 1989-90 figure. That company should be congratulated on that achievement.

In 1987-88, investment by Thames Water was £146·2 million. In 1991-92 it is £400 million, more than double the previous sum. Opposition Members should commend Thames on that achievement. Severn Trent Water invested £205 million in 1988-89 and £585 million in 1991-92, an extra £380 million to improve the water services in that area.

We have heard a certain amount about South West Water. Its investment in 1986 was £55 million. In 1990-91 it is £172 million. Some Labour Members complain about North West Water. That company has increased its investment from £188·8 million five years ago to £511·6 million. Opposition Members should be on their feet commending the water industry for those massive increases and for all the extra jobs that it has created.

I agree that the present pricing system is unfair, but that is because it is related to rateable values. There was no greater nonsense than the old rating system. In those days, we tried to measure the fair market rent of a property and say that that would be its rateable value. But there could never be a fair market in property, because we had a system of rent controls. Likewise, the rating system tried to measure what did not exist. The rating system is an unfair means of measuring water charges. It bears no relation to ability to pay or to consumption. It is inefficient because there is no incentive to conserve water.

The only effective way to charge for water is a system of water metering which relates the price paid to the level of consumption. It encourages the more economical use of water, as we saw in the Isle of Wight. Some will say that it creates hardship for large families, but that is no argument against water metering. It is an argument for giving additional help to families hit by it and for a generous system of family credit. It is not an argument for maintaining a system which is riddled with distortions and encourages an excessive demand for water.

Opposition Members are critical of the price mechanism and we have heard much about rationing by price. Is not virtually every commodity rationed by price? The only commodities of which there will be shortages are those that are not rationed by price. For years, we had a lack of rented accommodation in the private sector because the Labour party said that we should not have private-sector housing rationed by price. Instead, we were told that rents must be low, with the result that there was no private-sector rented housing. The same applies to water. Without a pricing mechanism, there are bound to

be shortages—*[Interruption.]* There is a shortage of water now because we have not had rationing by price. We have had an artificial system of water pricing, which is why we should go over to a system of water metering.

The debate has highlighted the opportunistic humbug of Opposition Members. They have said time and again that we need more investment in the water industry, but they have never said how it is to be financed. They claim that it should not be paid for by the consumer. If it is to be paid for by the taxpayer, they refuse to admit that the taxpayer is, in any event, the consumer in another guise. It is no good saying that the Government will pay, as though that is a panacea, because people must pay the taxes which the Government raise to pay for such investment. We all pay taxes——

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie (Glasgow, Pollok): Some people dodge taxes.

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Gentleman, from a sedentary position, talks about people dodging taxes. I find that rather rum coming from a Scottish Labour Member, when a number of Scottish Labour Members told the people of Scotland in the 1980s not to pay the poll tax—*[Interruption.]*—and I think I hear the hon. Gentleman saying, "Quite right." Obviously, he thinks that it is right for people to try to dodge that tax. It shows that he is a member of a party which favours tax dodging and fiddling. It shows how responsible the hon. Gentleman is. He is not fit to be a Member because—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. It might be advisable for the hon. Member to return to the subject of the debate, rather than to criticise other hon. Members.

Mr. Marshall: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was led astray by the sedentary intervention of an Opposition Whip. Whips are supposed to be silent. Had the hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie) remained silent, I would not have been led down that byway.

Opposition Members do not say how investment in the water industry should be financed. They have failed to produce a new pricing system that would be fair and would abolish the wasteful use of water. They have no idea how to react to the problems of the water industry. Instead, they censure the industry, despite the remarkable progress it has made since privatisation. They also censure the Government, even though we have been willing to face the problems of the industry with the aim of improving the quality of our water, our rivers and our beaches and to bring British water up to date in a way that would never have been achieved had the industry remained in the public sector.

7.16 pm

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): Before coming to this place, I spent a large part of the 1980s trying to alert people to Conservative plans for privatisation of the water industry. I had no doubt that there was a secret agenda, for several years prior to its being announced in the 1986 White Paper, to privatise the industry. Following that announcement, I spent much time warning people about the implications of that move.

I intervened earlier to point out that a Conservative Government first nationalised the water industry. The Minister appeared not to know that. As he seemed confused, I will explain. The assets of the water industry were inherited from local authorities and belonged to the people. The last Conservative Government seized those assets in order to acquire the right to sell them. The fact that that Government did not own the industry in the first instance blew off course their first attempt at water privatisation in the mid-1980s. I was pleased that when they finally got away with privatising the industry at the end of the 1980s, more than 80 per cent. of the British public had the good sense to oppose their plans. The fact that the Conservatives ignored that opposition destroys any claim that they wished to listen to the wishes of the people.

Ministers have echoed the claim of the water industry that privatisation has been a great success. They claim that water quality is at its highest level ever, they point to the fact that more sewerage works are meeting European conditions, and they applaud the standard of sewage being discharged into our rivers. There is no doubt that investment in the industry has been impressive in recent years. There has also been massive investment by those who work in the industry by ensuring that improvements have taken place. Little is said by the Conservatives about that contribution.

Before we get carried away by the improvements that have been made, however, let us pause to consider where they came from, and why the investment was necessary. Some of the Government's most strident claims are about the way in which privatisation freed the industry from the shackles and the dead hand of Government. The biggest dead hand was put on the industry by the very same Government who then sought to privatise it. Those shackles were part of the pre-privatisation process. To claim credit for removing those shackles is a bit like King Herod trying to claim credit for the expansion of Christianity.

For example, there is no doubt that investment in the industry has always been too low, but in the early 1980s there was a deliberate Government policy to hold back investment and force water authorities to accelerate the pace of servicing and paying off inherited debts. In the case of Severn Trent, the water authority which covered my constituency, more than £80 million a year, which could have gone into improving the quality of water services, had to go towards servicing debts. At that time, many of us appealed to the Government to write off those debts and allow water authorities to spend the money that needed to be spent, but the Government shrugged off those calls.

It is not surprising that, now that the industry is privatised, all those views have been turned on their heads. The debts, amounting to some £5 billion, which the Government said could not be written off when the industry was in the public sector suddenly became easy to write off once the industry had been privatised. Not content with that, the Government then gave the private sector industry a cash hand-out of £1·5 billion. Why could they not have done that for the public sector water industry? How was it suddenly possible to do so for the private sector?

Not content with that, the Government then gave the private sector water industry tax allowances amounting to some £7·7 billion to ensure that it had an easy ride for the first few years of its existence. Still not content, they sold off assets valued at more than £30 billion for about £5 billion. As though that were not enough, they gave consumers and taxpayers the dubious privilege of

[Mr. Richard Burden]

subsidies to the tune of several more million pounds for the sale of the water industry through a massive advertising campaign.

Are consumers—or, to use the current jargon, customers—to be grateful to the Government for such a deal? I doubt whether they will be grateful when they consider the massive profits that the water companies are now making and how water charges have gone up. The impact of those charges is real enough for the 22,000 people whose water supply has been disconnected in the last few years.

Just up the road from my constituency, South Staffordshire Water has the worst disconnection rate in the country. I am pleased that Severn Trent has been more modest than the national average in that respect, but disconnections in its area have still increased. Severn Trent says that it has come up with a novel idea to ensure that fewer families are cut off. It is called a pre-payment water meter. It is an interesting idea, a bit like the coin-operated gas or electricity meter, except that customers use a smart card, which is charged up in advance and provides them with a certain amount of water. Perhaps it measures the volume, but I suspect that the charge is made for a certain period of time.

Severn Trent says that the cards will help low-income families with their budgeting. To an extent, that will happen because if the budget goes wrong or the family cannot afford to charge up its card, the water will be cut off. I agree that that will help, if that is what is meant by budgeting, but some dangers may arise. When water was privatised, numerous codes of practice said that water could not be disconnected without a court order. Minister after Minister assured the House that court orders would be needed before so-called customers could be disconnected. With pre-payment meters, disconnections will happen because people will be unable to charge up their cards, and they will never get near a court. It seems that in the trial operations which are to take place with the use of pre-payment meters, when families have their supplies cut off there will be no obligation even to inform the local environmental health department.

To add insult to injury, it appears that a charge of some £26 will be made for those meters. Is that not an interesting idea? Low-income families with budgeting problems will have a meter installed and pay for the privilege. If their debt amounts to some £100, which is fairly standard, they have to pay £26 to have a meter installed. An interest rate of 26 per cent. to help the local water company improve its cash flow is rather steep. I hear today that Severn Trent is prepared to waive the charge but, surprisingly, Ofwat, which is meant to be the consumer's champion with responsibility also to shareholders, insists that the charge should remain. The most ridiculous aspect of pre-payment meters is that when a card runs out—when people have budgeting problems and lose their water—it does not mean that the debt stops. They will still incur water rates for the time when they have no water. That is a crazy idea.

If the water companies and the Government are worried about the impact on low-income families of massively rising water charges of the kind that we have seen recently, I make a couple of suggestions. If they go ahead with the pre-payment meter trials, I hope that the problems that I have raised will be dealt with first. Two more constructive suggestions are, first, that the Government should make regulation work. They should ensure that water bills do not go through the roof and families do not fall into such a trap. Secondly, the Government should reverse the ridiculous social security changes that they pushed through in the 1980s, removing help with the payment of water bills. If they reinstitute that help, it will go some way towards alleviating the problems of low-income families.

The only long-term solution is to restore to the water industry something that it should never have had taken away in the first place—democratic control.

7.26 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Some time before the 1987 election, my predecessor, who had been in the House for 32 years, asked me what my specialisation would be in the House. He seemed to be thinking of Attlee's dictum that one should specialise and keep out of the bars. When I told him that I was a chartered surveyor, he frowned and said, "Oh dear, they'll have you talking about drains. I advise you immediately to get an interest in foreign affairs or defence." He was Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee and able to get to Cyprus and Hong Kong at short notice. I should have listened to him because, shortly afterwards, I found myself on the Standing Committee discussing the privatisation of the water industry.

Many of the arguments rehearsed in Committee have been rehearsed again today, and some interesting suggestions have been made. The hon. Member for North Cornwall, (Mr. Tyler), who is in his seat, suggested that pensioners should be exempt from paying standing charges. We should have further details of that policy before long because, although I can see how people living alone could benefit from that exemption, what about those living with families who are not pensioners? How can legislation provide for them?

In Committee, as one might expect, the Bill was bitterly contested by the Labour party. The arguments went along the line just advocated by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden). Opposition Members said that God gave us the water and that we had no right to privatise it. We had to point out that He—I say "He" despite recent newspaper reports that God may be female—did not provide the stopcocks, pipes, reservoirs and so on. That was precisely the point in Committee and is still relevant now. Nevertheless, the Labour party still has a manifesto commitment to renationalise the water industry.

The formula advocated in Committee involved poachers and gamekeepers. The poachers—the water companies—were to be overseen for the first time by gamekeepers, or regulators. One was separated from the other. That is the essential difference between private companies with a regulator and a state-owned authority. With a state-owned authority and a regulator, there are merely two Government Departments, resulting in massive regulation and red tape. That does not allow for advancement.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) said that she had won some of the arguments in Committee. It seems that time dulls the memory as, to my certain

knowledge, my right hon. and learned Friend the present Secretary of State for the Environment won hands down on all the arguments, as was widely acknowledged.

Despite the Opposition's experience in Committee, on Second Reading and during the rest of the Bill's passage, they have tabled today's motion. According to the Leader of the Opposition—for a while yet, anyway—and his colleagues, "this House is alarmed". The House may be alarmed, but it does not seem that many Opposition Members are alarmed. One could fire a double-barrel shotgun in the Chamber without hitting many. Today is an Opposition Supply day, and next Thursday the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) will say that it is disgusting that no time has been allowed for various debates.

However, today is an Opposition day and the Opposition Whips must be saying, "Thank God for the two or three new faces that we see here." New Opposition Members have been busy writing their little speeches to keep the debate going until 10 o'clock—such is the alarm. The only one showing alarm—and not for the first time today—is the Opposition Whip, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie).

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn, Hatfield): They are all in the Cafeteria.

Mr. Knapman: Yes, that is where they are.

Companies in the water industry are successful. It is no shame to be showing record profits, and no disgrace to have record dividends or salaries. As has been widely reported, customers pay, on average, 46p a day for the delivery to the tap of 200 gallons of water weighing a ton or more, at a time when capital expenditure of about £28 billion is being promised.

Mr. Evans: The debate is unreal.

Mr. Knapman: My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn, Hatfield (Mr. Evans) says that it is unreal to suggest that the House is alarmed when the industry has such a record with which to commend itself to the House. That record shows just how much more efficient the private water companies are than their predecessor authorities.

I think that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will be pleased that companies are showing record profits. It is only if companies show record profits that people pay record tax demands, which allow for record sums to be spent on the national health service and other sectors.*[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Pollok laughs, but that is why there is privatisation in Poland, Hungary and the USSR. Before long, there will be privatisation in Albania, but the Opposition Front-Bench team will still be unable to see the advantages and will continue to believe in everything being state owned. The Labour party will soon be the only party, not just in Europe but in the world, with its own peculiar view on that subject. With such thinking, it should be preserved as a museum piece.

My constituency is partially served by the Severn Trent water authority and partially by the Wessex water authority. I shall use the Severn Trent authority as an example, as have one or two of my hon. Friends. Last year it spent £300 million running the business and at the same time ploughed £585 million into new capital investment projects. It spent more than it received from customers in any one year. That shows the need for the RPI plus K formula that was set up. If it is inadequate, it can be altered with the agreement of the regulators—indeed, on their instructions. The company's planned expenditure for the four years from 1990-93 is more than the amount allowed to the water authorities in the previous 10 years. I believe that the same may be true of other companies. Now, a business decision is taken in co-operation with the regulators.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will acknowledge the legal ring fence around the core water businesses. It is important to retain that ring fence, and there should be no cross-subsidisation. However, such companies must be granted the freedom to manage themselves and diversify if they wish. Some have already done so successfully and should be allowed to continue to do so. That is the case in France and other countries, even those with socialist Governments where private companies are encouraged. Standards have not slipped in the Severn Trent water authority, where there is a 99·6 per cent. pass rate on drinking water and a 99·8 per cent. compliance rate with effluent standards. That authority's record is jolly nearly perfect.

According to the motion, the House is alarmed, but my constituents and those of the Severn Trent district are so "alarmed" that only 15 customers in every 10,000 complained last year. I hope that that statistic puts matters into perspective. It may be that, as people are now clearer about how to complain, more are encouraged to do so. They also know that complaints made to a private company might result in action, whereas it was not much use complaining to a water authority that was essentially a Government Department. That factor may account for some additional complaints, but a rate of 15 out of every 10,000 is not too bad.

The motion has nothing to do with Labour's concern about public interest, but everything to do with the party's traditional hatred of successful companies and capitalism in general. Its arguments do not change and I suppose that the £28 billion can be found from the public sector. Is that the Opposition's promise? If so, we should start to calculate the total of all their pledges for the next election in four years' time. If the Labour party really is committed to expenditure on such a scale, it should say so clearly. It should not pretend that all the improvements can be carried out and no one will actually have to pay for them.

It is marvellous that such a level of services can be provided for 46p a day. Demand for water will certainly increase greatly as more people use dishwashers and the number of two and three-car families increases. Instead of a negative motion that does not even appeal to Opposition supporters—I suppose that it will soon be said that I have thinned them out still further—the Opposition should state how they will provide for the increased demand. Reference has already been made in the debate to reducing leakage, using more modern and efficient sewage plants and the need for vast capital expenditure.

In the 1980s, a considerable number of abstraction licences were granted. I am uneasy about whether treating all the bogs and water collection areas as a sponge that can be squeezed as hard and often as possible is necessarily in the public interest. In chalk regions, in the south and, not least, the south-east, many of the upper reaches of rivers and streams are drying up—the Avon and Darent are well-publicised examples of that. If my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) were here, he might say that the River Piddle was well named.

[Mr. Knapman]

I am not sure that the effect of large-scale underground abstraction is fully understood and I should be grateful if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State should refer to the latest thinking on that subject in his wind-up speech. It will be interesting to see which farmer will sue first for loss of crops due to the drop in the watertable, as levels continue to drop.

May we have the latest thinking on the possibility of charging by meter? I do not think that anyone is seriously suggesting pre-payment meters, which were mentioned by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden). The basic proposition that one pays for what one uses is a sound philosophy and, moreover, can be justified on environmental grounds. Is it correct that the introduction of metering might result in a 10 per cent. decrease in consumption? Simultaneous increases in demand would act to nullify that trend. If it is environmentally sound to use less water, then the presence of meters is a regular reminder in the form of a bill that people should use water sparingly.

Far more water is lost, however, through leaks. I understand that 25 gallons in every 100 from the reservoirs are lost, and because of increased expenditure that huge loss will be greatly reduced in the next few years. That can be done only with private capital. Of the 25 gallons leakage, about 15 may be lost between the reservoir and the stopcock. I am sure that water companies will deal with that, but it appears that the other 10 gallons are lost between the stopcock and the tap in the domestic property. That problem must be looked into; we must ask whether metering will help to reduce the loss of one gallon in 10.

Unless people are directly responsible for paying for what they use, they are unlikely to want to go to the expense of repairing their pipes. I hope that the Government will think along those lines. I suspect that the present system, under which all new properties must be metered and anyone else who feels disadvantaged without a meter has a choice, represents the right approach.

The hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) made an interesting speech, in which he drew attention to his constituents in Bude. He said that an elderly couple spent more on water than on rates. I wonder whether he pointed out to them their right to a meter if that was to their advantage. He hinted that they did not use much water——

Mr. Tyler: I did point out that option to them, but as the cost of a meter is £200 and there is an additional cost of £200 before it starts metering a single gallon, that would not be to their advantage.

Mr. Knapman: The hon. Gentleman will realise that the couple's method of payment was not changed by the Act. This method of charging has been followed for a great number of years, including during the Lib-Lab pact. The Government are now looking at varioius methods of charging, and have acknowledged that there are anomalies. I am glad to hear that the hon. Gentleman tried to help his constituents, but I am surprised that he did not mention that in his speech.

Another option is to provide new reservoirs. It is reasonable to argue, whether we have meters or not, that, because of increasing demand and consumption, more reservoirs will be necessary. That could be an argument against metering. I asked about the cost of metering the whole Severn Trent area; the answer bears out what the hon. Member for North Cornwall said: it might be as much as £700 million. But the cost of the Carsington reservoir, which was opened by Her Majesty a few weeks ago, was £100 million. Thanks to the benefits of an integrated system—yet another benefit since privatisation—water can flow to almost any area served by Severn Trent. If metering costs £700 million as against a new reservoir costing £100 million, Ministers may believe that constructing more reservoirs is cheaper and more efficient than metering.

Politics is always a question of priorities. I wonder what the Minister's thoughts are. If we are to reduce demand, we need metering in some areas. We must reduce waste of water; that is already happening in many areas and has been promised by most water companies. Alternatively, we can increase supply by storage in reservoirs. Again, it is a question of priorities, although we must recognise that the whole idea is not to have politicians running the business any longer.

Today's motion notwithstanding, it was absolutely right to privatise the industry. The companies are strong and profitable, and most importantly of all, they are regionally based. Many of the companies used to be based in London. It is important to the areas concerned that water and electricity companies be regionally based.

The House should be grateful to the Opposition for raising this issue, because it gives us the chance to congratulate the water companies, which are looking after their staff, their shareholders and—by improving standards—their customers. Those customers are supplied with an average 200 gallons a day for 46p. That being so, the House need not be as alarmed as the Opposition suggest.

7.44 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I want to talk about the effects of privatisation of the water industry on my constituents. I want to talk about the grotesque pay rise awarded to himself by the chairman of Thames Water; about Thames Water's profiteering; and above all about Thames Water's asset-stripping to enhance its profits at the expense of Hackney's environment.

Throughout the 1980s, privatisation was sold to the British public in terms of efficiency and service. In fact, it was always about profit, not people, and about big salaries for the few and higher charges for the many. Water privatisation is a perfect example of what was wrong with all the privatisations that the Government pushed through in the 1980s.

Thames Water, which covers my constituency, has 17·5 million consumers. Since privatisation, they have seen the salaries of the bosses of Thames Water shoot up. For instance, the salary of Roy Watts rose from £34,000 in 1988 to £160,000 in 1991. Conservative Members may wonder why that matters, but if they earned the average salary of one of my constituents and saw one man's salary shoot up without justification, they might be shocked too.

The highest paid director in Thames Water earns £209,000. Salaries for the top management have shot up, with no justification on grounds of productivity or any other criteria. Charges have risen, too. In 1986, the average domestic consumer in the Thames Water area paid £82·24

a year. Now, he pays £139 a year. Complaints have risen as well: last year, there were more than 10,000 of them. In the meantime, Thames Water has diversified into property speculation, to the concern of the regulatory authorities.

Stoke Newington's two reservoirs are a matter of anxiety to Hackney people and to me, because they show the way forward for other water authorities. They show the sort of profiteering and asset-stripping that water authorities throughout the country will go in for under the new regime.

We have a 93-acre reservoir site in Stoke Newington. The site became redundant because of the new London ring main. It is the size of Regent's park, a sort of secret garden in the middle of Hackney. On it stand four listed buildings, including a remarkable pumping station built to look like a Scottish castle. The site of the two reservoirs has plants, wild flowers and fish and 16 species of bird including smew, Bewick's swans, tufted ducks, gulls and grebes. There are also gerbils. All this is remarkable in one of the poorest and most built-up inner city areas in the country.

This open space, this nature reserve, serves 26,000 people, including my constituents on the huge Woodberry Down and Lincoln Court estates. Few of them have back gardens. There is much unemployment, there are many elderly people and young children, and there is a terrible shortage of open spaces. We in Hackney want this precious site redeveloped for need, not greed.

Local people have come up with several suggestions for the site: a nature reserve, a site for sailing, canoeing and sports—important in an area of such high youth unemployment; a leisure centre; an alternative technology centre; a garden centre; a workshop space. A site of this magnitude will not fall vacant in Hackney again; nor will the opportunity to provide such amenities come round again.

But what is Thames Water thinking of doing? It goes almost without saying that rational planning in the public interest is not on the agenda. Thames Water's plans involve expensive redevelopment, mostly for houses. It will keep one reservoir as it is and might allow some limited sailing, but it will not allow any other leisure activities. At the other reservoir, there is a proposal for a housing development of 70 to 90 units on a two-and-a-half acre site. The remaining 19 acres will be covered in housing.

Thames Water is not interested in leisure or nature or in the wishes and priorities of local people: it is interested only in maximising its profit. It ought to know the end result of such speculative development, because it has the example of Canary Wharf, a major site that currently has no proper public transport and few facilities. No thought was given to local people when it was being developed, and now it is a huge white elephant. However, Thames Water presses on regardless.

I and my constituents oppose a massive private housing development on the site, because the houses would be completely out of the reach of the ordinary people of Hackney. The development will not meet their housing needs. It will be a yuppie housing stockade in the middle of one of London's poorest areas. The people of Hackney need play spaces for their children and recreational space for young people and retired people. For a privatised water industry that is completely profit-led, such facilities are apparently out of the question. As I have said, Thames Water is not interested in local people or in nature conservancy. The new management have awarded themselves grotesque pay rises and are interested only in the bottom line.

Future legislation should provide for poor families to be helped with their water bills. Conservative Members could scarcely contain their boredom and derision when Opposition Members opposed the abolition of social security help with water charges. With their MPs' salaries and, is some cases, big consultancy fees, they do not understand what water charges mean to pensioners and people on fixed incomes. The decision to abolish social security help for water bills is a retrograde step.

I invite the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for the Environment to visit Hackney. John Major and Mr. Howard went all the way to Rio to talk about the environment. They should come to Stoke Newington to look at our environment. I invite them to speak to people on Woodberry Down estate, to go to the top floor of Lincoln Court and admire the view over the reservoirs and the wildlife, and see how that would be ruined by Thames Water's redevelopment plans. I urge them to talk to mothers and young people on the estates about the need for play space and recreation areas. If they did that, they would find that the need to protect our environment is every bit as pressing as the need that they found in Rio. They might find it in their hearts to ask Thames Water to reconsider its plans for greedy property speculation.

Hackney needs open spaces and homes to rent, and the water authorities should not be allowed to award their managers ludicrous pay rises or to engage in profiteering. Above all, they should not be allowed to asset-strip our environment in the search for profit. Thames Water is a major landowner in London, with over £1,000 million-worth of property. If it is allowed to implement its plans for the reservoir site, it and the other water companies will see it as the green light to continue asset-stripping. Before privatisation, water authorities saw themselves as custodians of the environment. The people of Hackney wish that the privatised water companies would take their responsibilities seriously.

7.54 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): This is an important debate about the future of an industry with responsibility for the very essence of life. Since privatisation, as many hon. Members have said, investment has been high and will be about £28 billion over the next 10 years. That amounts to £5,000 for every minute of every day. All hon. Members agree that capital projects must be paid for by the consumer or by the taxpayer. Labour's manifesto made it clear that a Labour Government would return water company assets to common ownership. A Labour Government would pay not only for that, but to keep water bills down, and the taxpayer would be faced with a double whammy.

I am concerned about the delivery of quality water. European directives have increasingly imposed more stringent demands on the water companies. Nitrate limits have been lowered from the World Health Organisation's approved level of 100 parts per million to 50 parts per million and may shortly be further lowered. The companies are also being obliged to meet other stringent demands. The limit for pesticides is down to 0·1 microgrammes per litre. That is such a low level that sophisticated techniques are required to detect it, and such

[Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown]

techniques are expensive. The water companies deserve help from public authorities to meet those standards and British Rail, local authorities and farmers must use pesticides responsibly.

The water companies will also have to meet the European directive on lead. The demand will be stringent in, for example, Wales and the north of England. Lead levels must be kept at not more than 50 parts per million. Should the taxpayer meet the bill, or should the consumer be obliged to put his water pipes in order?

Water must be treated as a precious resource. Anglian Water recently estimated that over the next 30 years the demand for water will increase by a staggering 41 per cent. We must look diligently at how that increase in demand can be met. Will we abstract more from our rivers and build more reservoirs? Thames Water is about to face a massive public inquiry over a proposal for a big new reservoir just outside Didcot. There may come a time at which supply cannot meet demand.

I welcome the initiative by the Secretary of State for the Environment in calling for a careful examination of the use of water resources. I also welcome yesterday's news that the National Rivers Authority is investigating the levels of about 40 key rivers. I hope that it will examine the levels of three key rivers in my constituency, the Churn, the Coln and the Windrush.

Over the next 10 years or so, there must be a new method of charging. The new council tax will provide an ideal opportunity to look at new methods more closely related to the size and value of properties. It will also provide an opportunity to examine water charges for one-person households. Larger properties do not always contain more occupants, although that is usually the case. The cost of universal metering could not be fully justified. Most water companies now require metering for the major industrial users and large hotels, commercial premises and agricultural users. They also require all new houses to be metered. Partial metering is the best way forward, with changes for other consumers based on the new council tax.

Given the inexorable rise in demand, there is a need to rectify leakage, which averages 17 to 20 per cent. in most water company pipes. Before privatisation, leakage in Thames Water was 28 per cent. so privatisation has forced the water companies to consider carefully the amount of water that is being lost. Thames Water recently introduced a sophisticated technique to monitor water flow by computer. In the past three months, it has reduced leakage by 3 per cent. That is to be welcomed, and I urge other water companies to consider whether they cannot adopt that technology to their benefit.

It is not only in water company pipes that leakages occur. About 10 per cent. of all water supplied is lost in consumers' pipes. The average householder uses 28 gallons a day, and a leaky tap could lose almost the same amount.

The use of hosepipes and water sprinklers should also be carefully reviewed. While the average consumer uses 28 gallons of water a day, a sprinkler can use 200 gallons an hour. Water companies should consider introducing a licensing system for hosepipes and sprinklers. Hosepipe use is a social activity rather than a necessity. If one walks down any street in this country, one can see people watering their gardens. The moment someone comes along they want to talk to, they stand still, drop the hosepipe and start chatting.

Privatisation has been an outstanding success. Despite the fact that the water industry is one of the most regulated of all in the country, it still produces a level of service second to none. Investment, productivity and quality is up. Why else would the canny French want to invest in our industry, and to bottle our own excellent water?

8.1 pm

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) on his maiden speech. This morning, I had the pleasure of joining him in a game of football between the parliamentary team and members of the Press Gallery, which we lost 3-0. My hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) also made a sterling effort in that game. In the same way that we lost that match, I am sure that we will lose today's motion in the Division, but, having heard the speeches of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I am confident that we have won the argument.

When water was privatised in 1989, the Government's objective was to ensure that private investors had a say in controlling the new companies. A resource that was once owned by everyone in this Chamber and throughout the United Kingdom was transferred to the ownership of a selected few. The influence that I and my constituents once had on the industry's future direction was lost for ever.

Presumably the Government believed that water services and standards would be improved by privatisation, but, as every Opposition speaker has said, there has been a noticeable drop in standards—and, thanks to Government policy, some of the poorest of my constituents are denied water services.

My objections to water privatisation are summed up in the Opposition's motion, which mentions the record levels of disconnections, rising prices, the inflated salaries of management and the increasing sham of investment.

Water charges in my constituency have increased sharply since privatisation. In 1988-89, Welsh Water charged £147 per annum. By 1990-91, that figure increased to £168; in 1991-92 to £195; and this year, to £212. That is equivalent to annual rises of just over 9, 14, 10 and 8 per cent. respectively—a total of nearly 42 per cent. since privatisation. At the same time, the retail prices index rose by only 19·5 per cent. Welsh Water charges have increased by 23 per cent. over and above every other commodity.

Conservative Members argue that investment is important, and that it accounts for the initial prices rises, but why should the whole burden fall on consumers—many of whom are poor and face other pressures at this time? The cost of investment could have been met by borrowing, to be repaid over a period of time. Perhaps the Minister will explain why the whole burden of investment costs has fallen on the consumer.

Many of my constituents ask out loud why Wales, which is blessed with water and is an exporter of water, has to meet price increases of 42 per cent. One of my constituents living in a village near Mold in Clwyd is an 82-year-old widow who has a one-bedroom flat. Just before the election, she wrote to me asking why she has to

pay £212 a year—the same as an incomed family living in a five-bedroom house down the road. There can be no justification for that.

The director of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux said:

"Water is a vital service, and action should be taken to ensure that it remains available to vulnerable sections of the community."

The citizens advice bureaux are handling 55,000 water debt cases a year throughout the United Kingdom. My constituents very often cannot afford to pay their water charges—it is not that they do not want to pay. When a water charge of £212 is coupled with the poll tax and a mortgage or a higher council rent, and given that the Government will not introduce a minimum wage, many of my constituents find themselves under tremendous financial pressure.

In 1989-90, which was the first year of privatisation, 1,356 consumers had their water services cut off. Last year, the figure rose to 2,951. I ask the Minister to compare Welsh Water's record with the rest of the United Kingdom. For every 10,000 Welsh Water customers, 26 were cut off—but the figure for England was only 10. What is the reason for that discrepancy. Why are Welsh Water's customers served so badly? Why have I, as a Member of Parliament, no say in that performance of that company, which operates a monopoly?

Cut-offs are occurring because of price increases, and because council tenants are having to meet separate water charges for the first time, and homes are being repossessed.

Mr. Hall: Does my hon. Friend agree that Welsh Water's charges are expensive by comparison with other companies? Is not that the reason for the higher number of cut-offs in Wales?

Mr. Hanson: I thank my hon. Friend for that observation. However, not everyone in Wales is fortunate enough to suffer disconnection. The chairman of Welsh Water, John Elfed Jones, has seen his salary increase to £143,000, and with shares and other perks worth £200,000 he has enjoyed a 211 per cent. rise in his salary since privatisation.

This year, Welsh Water will make a pre-tax profit of £143 million, which is 11 per cent. higher than last year. According to weekend newspaper reports, bonuses worth £290,000 are heading Mr. Jones's way. That is insensitive and obscene when the company over which he presides is doubling and trebling the number of disconnections in my constituency.

Whom am I to turn to? Am I to turn to Ian Byatt, Director General of Water Services? He said:

"If they consider their executives are worth a lot of money, that is a matter for the shareholders and not for the regulator to challenge."

How can I explain to my constituent in Mold who must pay water charges of £212, and who may shortly join the list of those who are disconnected, that I have no power through the regulator to challenge the massive salary increases given to the chairman of Welsh Water?

We are told that higher charges are to pay for investment. In the final three years of the last Labour Government, investment in the Welsh water industry in real terms totalled £129 million, £133 million and £103 million. In the first 10 years of the Tory Government, that investment dropped to the lower end of £60 million, £70 million, and £80 million. Only since privatisation has Welsh Water's capital expenditure returned to the levels at which it was when my party left office in 1979. When I asked the Leader of the House about that during Prime Minister's Question Time last week, he failed miserably to answer.

Our approach to Welsh Water should not be entirely negative, although we are very concerned about price rises, capital expenditure and cut-offs. I favour an element of public control, which would give my constituents and me a line of accountability. Like 70 per cent. of the Welsh people who voted on 9 April, I should like an elected Welsh assembly, and I should like it to control the water service. The Conservatives will disagree with that; let them go to Wales, where 27 Labour Members were elected on 9 April, along with other Opposition Members who took Conservative seats. Welsh Water should be brought into line with other services: it should be placed under the control of an elected assembly, so that it is accountable.

In Wales and elsewhere, water services are not accountable to hon. Members and the people whom they represent. There is no way in which we can influence the policies of water companies. If the Government vote against the motion—as they will—they will be avoiding their responsibility to stand up for the poorest of my constituents, who face the imposition of cut-offs by an insensitive company. They will be avoiding their duty to put down a marker—to say, "Whatever our political differences, we know that it is insensitive of water company chairmen to accept such large bonuses and salaries while presiding over a rundown in capital expenditure, and allowing services to be disconnected."

If you go into the Lobby and vote against the motion, you will demonstrate to the people of Delyn, and the people of Wales in general, that you are not concerned about their water services——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Member should remember that he is addressing me, and I am not going anywhere.

Mr. Hanson: I am sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have done that before, and I shall probably do it again.

If Conservative Members vote against the motion, they will let down the people of Wales. They will be endorsing large price rises and high salaries, and they will show the people of Wales why there was an overwhelming vote for alternative Governments on 9 April.

8.12 pm

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): An earlier speaker began by declaring an interest as a director of a water company. I declare an interest as a consumer, and as one who represents 3,500 people in south Staffordshire whose water supply has been disconnected in the past year. That figure is seven times the national average, and more than twice as high as that applying to the next worst company.

People in my area feel very strongly about what is happening to the water industry, and especially strongly about disconnections. I should add that in the past year the company concerned has achieved an 11 per cent. increase in turnover, and a 42 per cent. increase in profit after tax. It has achieved a dividend increase of 642 per cent. since the time when, at 4p per share, it declared as a statutory water company. Now, having converted to plc status, it declares at 40·2p. We are not dealing with a company that is strapped for cash.

[Dr. Tony Wright]

I declare another interest. People keep mentioning a K factor. That talk of "RPI plus K". When my constituents ask about the scale of water charges, I have to explain how those charges are calculated. As Conservative Members have instructed, I talk of "RPI plus K", telling them that they need K to pay for all the capital spending. My constituents then ask, "May we have some of this K? We have a lot of capital spending to do. Why do only the water companies have K? Is that what pays for all the salaries that we keep hearing about? Where does it come from?" They have heard of Special K and they know that it does good things, but this is ridiculous.

All that focuses attention on the history of the subject that we are discussing. Hon. Members have mentioned leakage from pipes and water company investment. In the 1980s, Opposition Members argued that infrastructural investment was needed because, as well as improving the service, it would help the economy. The Conservatives, however, said that they did not want that, and they are having to act now only because of European directives about higher standards.

The tragedy is that with a different policy we could have embarked on all those measures over the past 10 years, and they need not have been financed directly through consumer prices—which, of course, affects poor consumers most. Conservative policy has led to the making of a strategic choice: the Government have been forced to act in this way because they turned off the tap of infrastructural investment for so many years.

My main point has been touched on by a number of other hon. Members. It relates to the question of accountability—the question of who is now answerable for prices, disconnections, corporate salaries and all the other matters that we discuss in the House. What can the House do about that? What can Members of Parliament do for their constituents? The answer, I am afraid, is nothing.

What, indeed, can be done by Ofwat and its assorted arms? Again, the answer is nothing. Ofwat can snap at the companies, but the companies can snap back. Unless a licensing system and a code of conduct are introduced which will make the companies work genuinely in the public interest, there will be no reason for them to do so.

Ministers tell the House, as a Minister has told us today, that they are not responsible for the matters about which hon. Members have spoken, but in a sense Ministers are the public relations arm of the water companies. They are saying, "These are splendid organisations—go out and buy some shares." When we advance criticisms, they say, "The regulators are there, and they are independent."

There are problems with the regulators and with the regulatory regimes that they operate. The way in which they are appointed is a problem. The idea that regulation solves the accountability problem is all wrong. After all, we are talking about monopoly suppliers of essential services. Hon. Members want to ask the Government about such matters as pricing, but the Government simply say, "Do not blame us—it is not our fault. These splendid companies are doing these things, and the regulators are keeping an eye on them." That is a profoundly unsatisfactory answer. There is a vacuum where accountability should be: one kind of accountability has been removed, and nothing has been put in its place.

Let me offer a practical suggestion. If the House were less supine in relation to the Executive, it would not tolerate such a position. It would not tolerate the creation of what are essentially private governments, delivering essential services to our constituents on a monopoly basis with no accountability. It would demand to be involved in that process, to appoint the regulator, perhaps on a short-term contract, to have a regular review of the regulatory process and to be centrally involved in that. But I am afraid that it will not have that. It will have the kind of thing that we have seen today, and the upshot of that will be that as the issue becomes one of who speaks for the consumer and the public interest, people will increasingly see that it is Opposition Members who speak for the consumer and the public interest and that it is Conservative Members who have abdicated such responsibilities into other hands—remember again, monopoly suppliers of essential services.

The Government, softening us up for privatisation, had a water awareness campaign. They had to remind us that there was a thing called water. They thought that people had forgotten that, that they needed to spend several million pounds of our money to tell us that there was a thing called water so that we might go out and buy some shares in companies that would sell it to us—our company that they had taken. It was a nice little idea.

The end of the story is that the Government are now engaged in a non-awareness campaign, trying to make people not aware of what has happened to the process and to the companies so that people will not be aware of pricing levels, real investment records, corporate salaries, disconnections, or the realities of life when public services are provided in that way. In particular, they will not be aware of the vacuum of accountability around the process. People will look to the Government and to the House to do something about what has been talked about today. The Government will say, as they have said, that they can do nothing about such things and people will therefore increasingly look to Opposition Members to do something.

Mrs. Mahon: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Earlier this evening I intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) and asked him how much he received as a non-executive director of Yorkshire Water. I have now learnt from *Hansard* that that has been wiped from the record. I should like your advice, Madam Deputy Speaker, on whether that can be possible when a Member has asked such a question in the House and what I as a Back Bencher can do to have it put back on the record.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Lady will appreciate that I was not in the Chair at the time. I shall ensure that inquiries are made. As I am sure the hon. Lady will understand, I cannot take the matter beyond that point now.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I distinctly heard my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) put that question.

8.22 pm

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): I rise to address the House on this subject because investment in pollution control is of great importance to my constituents in

Blackpool, South. Hon. Members may be aware from adverse publicity that for a number of years Blackpool has had a considerable problem of sea pollution which I am glad to say is now being addressed by urgent measures which are being taken by North West Water.

It seemed appropriate today to recognise the great achievement of North West Water in tackling the problem, first by a disinfection scheme which is due to start during this bathing season and, secondly, by a construction of a new sewage treatment plant which is expected to be operational by 1995. I stress that it is only the success of North West Water that has enabled it to make investment. The need for such investment requires that it be a successful company, as it is, earning the profits that it does.

In speeches made by Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), there seemed to be an attempt to suggest that profit is a dirty word. It is the dirty water that the profit is combating. It is essential that water companies such as North West Water continue their investment in pollution control because only then will tourism, on which my constituency depends heavily, be able to recover from its current difficulties.

I hope that Opposition Members, particularly those with connections in the north-west, will bring whatever influence they can to bear on the Labour leader of Lancashire county council who has made a crusade of blackening the reputation of Blackpool, stressing the pollution that has unfortunately occurred due to under-investment in pollution control when the Labour party was in power for many years rather than concentrating on efforts to eradicate that pollution.

The Opposition need to concentrate much more on constructive measures to control pollution rather than on criticising the problems which, in many cases, can be laid at their door. It is only since the Government came to power and introduced the measures that they have in relation to the water industry, that we have had the investment that was so badly needed to control that pollution.

It is important to consider the progress that is now being made on the cleanliness of bathing waters around Britain's coastlines and to recall that an independent body such as the Consumers Association has stressed that many continental European countries are far less scrupulous than Britain about testing their bathing waters. Opposition Members and their colleagues outside the House have stressed the problems of European Commission prosecutions of the United Kingdom Government for water pollution. However, they should recall that 11 of the 12 EC countries are currently facing prosecution by the Commission for dirty bathing waters. The only reason why the 12th, Portugal, has not been prosecuted is that the EC directive concerned, under which such prosecutions are brought, will apply to it only later this year.

Because Britain's testing methods are more scrupulous and scientifically accurate, we are providing ammunition to the European Commission which is not provided by many other EC countries. Therefore, it is far from the case that we have the dirtiest bathing waters in the community, as I am sure any of my constituents and any other hon. Members' constituents who travel abroad will be only too well aware.

Standards of United Kingdom waters are improving all the time and when testing is continued later this year during the tourist season we shall see the fruits of that. The EC blue flag symbol will be displayed at far more British beaches. It is important for me, as the Member of Parliament for an important tourist resort, to stress that Blackpool's bathing waters are improving all the time. I hope that that will encourage more and more tourists to visit my constituency.

However, the water industry has other priorities which also involve my constituency. The Minister may be aware that my constituency has an extremely successful manufacturing company involved in the production of water treatment plant. My right hon. Friend, his colleagues and the Director General of Water Services have been in correspondence with me about the importance of ensuring that that company can sell and distribute its products as widely as possible in order to earn important income from exports and continue important business development in Britain. I am extremely grateful for the help that the Minister, his colleagues and the director general have given. I am particularly grateful for help with the problems caused by the variability of water pressures set by local authorities when new housing developments are planned.

There has been a difficulty with which my hon. Friend the Minister assisted my constituency company. Often, local authorities specify a range of water pressures that are very different from the water pressures that can actually be expected. Wide ranges of pressures have been specified by local authorities and the equipment that my constituency company has been encouraged to develop and produce cannot be ordered because the range of pressures specified is too wide, even though it could be used. I urge my hon. Friend and his ministerial colleagues to continue the work that they have done in encouraging local authorities and others to specify the exact water pressure to be expected on different housing developments. That would assist companies such as that in my constituency.

I also urge my hon. Friend the Minister to continue his discussions on coastal zone protection with our right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I hope that when the new environmental protection legislation comes before the House it will incorporate continued firm policies to improve coastal zone protection. That issue is extremely important in my constituency, particularly for hotels near the sea front. We need a programme of sea defences in areas such as mine which suffer the extremes of tide and wind which can cause flooding problems at very high tides. We have been fortunate in recent years not to have had those high tides but businesses in my constituency have suffered from serious flooding in the past. I am aware that the coastal zone protection document produced recently by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was widely welcomed in my constituency. I trust that the Departments involved will continue with those policies.

I support the continued investment in all aspects relating to water. It is so important in my constituency and I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will continue with his successful policies.

8.32 pm

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): In a newspaper article, John Elfed Jones, the chairman of Welsh Water, said that he was adamant that his company gave "value for money". He insisted that water was

[Mr. Cynog Dafis]

relatively cheap, and gave figures to suggest that people were getting a fine product for a low price. On the surface, his argument seems perfectly plausible. Water is an essential and it is a wonderful thing which just comes to our taps. For most of us, the price is extremely reasonable. However, it may be that even those of us who are on good salaries will be squealing in a few years as the K factor leads to what will probably be a 50 per cent. increase in the price of water in real terms by the end of the century.

For low-income families, a sum of £200 or so a year is a serious burden. That point has been made more than once today, but it needs to be made again. It is not good enough to talk constantly about this wonderful commodity that is provided at a reasonable price. The fact that it can be a serious burden is reflected in the increasing level of disconnections.

The statement by the chairman of Welsh Water is somewhat complacent. The situation that he described conceals serious injustices—the sort of injustices that have been typical of government in Britain since 1979. The people of Wales have had to endure Tory government since 1979, despite the fact that that party has had less than 30 per cent. support in Wales for all that time.

The injustice is clearly linked to the creation of privatised monopolies. That term has been used several times, but it is true. The injustices is seen in the increased profits of Welsh Water over the past few years. Profits have increased from £95 million to £128 million up to £138 million over the past three years, and hefty dividends have been paid to shareholders.

The injustice is most clearly seen in the increase in prices over and above that required to cover inflation—the notorious K factor about which we have heard so much today. Welsh Water allowed a K factor of 6·5 per cent. To its credit, this year it has used a K factor of only 5 per cent. The purpose of the K factor, as has been said, is infrastructural and environmental improvements. In Wales, it is also to be used to deal with coastal pollution.

There is no doubt that investment is needed to deal with coastal pollution, which is a contentious issue in my constituency in west Wales. Recently, a survey of 20 beaches carried out by the district council on the basis of the EC water directive showed that only two of those 20 could be designated as excellent, five were good and 13 were poor. That is unsatisfactory, and it has serious implications for human health and, perhaps more importantly, for marine ecology. There is considerable evidence that viruses emanating from human sewage persist in sea water for long periods and, as a result, there has been evidence of sickness among sea mammals such as dolphins and porpoises in Cardigan bay.

Sea pollution must also be addressed for the sake of the holiday industry. There is a great deal of dissatisfaction and anxiety in my constituency about the effect of reports of sea pollution on the holiday industry.

Investment is required to deal with that. There must be investment in adequate treatment such as disinfection. Clearly, long sea outfalls are not the answer. In fact, it has been argued that long sea outfalls are worse for marine ecology, and mammals such as dolphins are probably more seriously affected. Human sewage gathering on the sea bed has serious effects on marine ecology generally.

It is worth mentioning that, to its credit, Welsh Water has undertaken to provide full treatment in certain circumstances. In the Aberystwyth area, there is to be full treatment with ultra-violet disinfection. Welsh Water withdrew its original scheme for a long sea outfall, which would have met the EC standards for a designated beach at Aberystwyth but would have simply removed the damage elsewhere, either further out to sea or to another beach. The danger of EC designation of certain beaches is that it will simply move the problem elsewhere. As I have said, Welsh Water introduced an excellent scheme, but it did so only in response to intense and well-informed public campaigns and pressure from those who were not prepared to accept the original intention.

Such plans involve large-scale investment, and a great deal more is needed. It is certainly needed in west Wales. We must ask how it is to be paid for. That brings us back to the K factor. It is to be paid for by the K factor, through consumer pricing. It is not fanciful to describe the K factor as a non-progressive tax. Water bills are made up of a standing charge and a payment based on rateable values, which have only a tenuous relationship with people's ability to pay. Environmental improvements are being effected by charging the badly-off the same as the well-off. That gross injustice is all too typical of the policies from which we have suffered in the past 13 years, which found their apotheosis in the poll tax.

My party is convinced that environmental improvements should be funded from general taxation. People have suggested borrowing, which is another reasonable suggestion, but environmental improvements that benefit everybody should be funded from general taxation. Even Conservative Members have made that suggestion.

Welsh Water recognises the force of the argument, as evidenced by its recent application to the west Wales task force for funds for a sewage treatment works at Goodwick and Fishguard. It recognises the need for environmental improvements to be funded not only from itself but from public funds. That is part of the economic renewal programme for west Wales. I hope that it is successful in obtaining the funds, but it recognises the need for funds from general taxation and not simply consumer pricing.

Plaid Cymru takes the principle of social equity further than that. People entitled to income support and housing benefit should be entitled to water charge benefit. That suggestion has been made by hon. Members on both sides of the House and recognised as a possibility. Water, like housing, is a basic need. If there is such a thing as housing benefit, why not water charge benefit?

We advocate a statutory 25 per cent. reduction in water charges for single-person households. That, again, is a reasonable suggestion.

The sense of grievance about social inequity in Wales is compounded by a national sense of injustice. I use the word "national" advisedly. There is a sense that Welsh water resources have been exploited. Wales is a nation rich in water resources. It has been plundered at great cost to its communities and with a minimum of benefit to its economy. Water is an emotive subject in Wales.

The injustice continues today. In 1991, Welsh Water's consumers—the majority of consumers in Wales—paid an average of £90 for water supply, compared with £58 in the north-west of England. Welsh Water is selling water to the north-west for two thirds of the price that is paid by its own customers. That must be crazy, and it is profoundly unsatisfactory.

It is high time that Welsh Water was able to get a fair price for its water. That has been recognised by the chairman of Welsh Water, Mr. John Elfed Jones. If we got a fair price for that water, it would make a significant difference to the burden on Welsh customers.

If the ambitious plans of the National Rivers Authority to pipe water from Wales to the south-east of England were to come to fruition, and if there were a fair pricing system, it could bring an additional £20 million to Wales, which would make a significant difference to our water prices. I regard that scheme as environmentally highly suspect. It is clear to me that we need to reduce the profligate use of water. If such a scheme to transfer water went ahead, it would be intolerable if we were not able to capitalise on a natural asset by charging a proper price for it.

I finish on an overtly political point that has already been made by the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson). If we had had a Parliament in Wales, we would not have privatised water. Social equity would have been fundamental to our system of pricing, and we would have ensured that water resources were developed to provide economic and environmental benefits for Wales and a service to our own people. I am quite confident that a Welsh Parliament will come, but it may take a few years. That is why Plaid Cymru will seek to move a draft Bill in this Session to introduce measures to mitigate the injustice of the existing system. We shall seek support for the Bill from all parties in the House.

8.46 pm

Ms. Jean Corston (Bristol, East): I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me in this debate, and I intend to confine my remarks to the issue of drinking water quality. The concern that has been expressed about the quality of drinking water is evidenced by the volume of sales of water filters. Hon. Members should go and see how many water filters are on sale in any high street shop or Boots the chemist. If people were not buying them, they would not be for sale in such numbers or variety. The increase in sales of mineral water is not just a question of style or the yuppie life but of mistrust of drinking water.

That was brought to my attention a year ago by somebody in the Bristol, East constituency when I was the Labour parliamentary candidate. A complaint was made about the taste of drinking water in one part of my constituency, Barton Hill. I suggested that the complainant, who was a member of a tenants group, should write to Bristol Water and ask for an analysis of drinking water at her residence, which she was entitled to under statute. She did so and received a long printout, none of which she could understand, but, fortunately, some of us could. It showed that her water was in clear breach of the drinking water directive.

That led to people in other parts of Bristol, East making similar requests to Wessex Water. Indeed, it was bombarded with requests for analysis, each of which showed that the water supply throughout Bristol, East was in breach of the drinking water directive. Let us remember that the directive was issued in 1976, yet the Minister referred to it as though it were quite new.

The water in Bristol, East was shown to be in breach for ammonium, lead, nitrites, nitrate and pesticide. I shall read the pesticide printout for a residence in Bristol, East. For a pesticide called CMPP, 40 per cent. of samples contravened the directive. For a pesticide called atrazine, 66 per cent. of samples contravened the directive. When I drew that figure to the attention of Bristol Water, the head of water quality management said that atrazine was "not very toxic". I do not consider "not very toxic" reassuring, and nor do my constituents. As for a pesticide called simazine, 16·6 per cent. of samples contravened the directive.

I then discovered that some of the analysis sheets showed that water in some parts of my constituency contained coliform or harmful bacteria. Under the Water Act 1989, there is a legal presumption against coliform of any shape or form. The analysis sheet from which I am reading shows that water contained 16 per cent. coliform and 4·5 per cent. faecal coliform. That means faecal material in the drinking water of my constituents.

I drew that to the attention of Bristol Water, which replied that it was probably due to people rinsing nappies under plastic taps. What decade are such people living in? Nowadays people use disposable nappies which they do not rinse under taps. It is nonsense to suggest that one can blame faecal material in drinking water on one or two people who happen to have babies and plastic taps on the basis that they still use terry towelling nappies. That seems a spurious reason.

People have also rung to say that, when they filled their fish tanks, the fish died. What in the water causes fish to die? This is happening 15 years after the directive was introduced. The Government have had years in which to invest in the water industry, and it does not lie in their mouths to blame Labour, which had only three years to do something, for their decade of neglect since the 1976 directive.

If that was the case and still is the case—water is still in a bad state in Bristol, East—and if that had been made clear to the public in 1989, who would have bought shares in the water industry? People would have been told to buy shares, but in an industry that was massively under-invested and in which the water was clearly in breach of the directive. They would have been told that the Government had had only 10 years in which to comply and that their time was up and the game was up, so what did they do? They introduced the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989.

Under those regulations, the water companies were told that they would be immune from prosecution if they gave what were called undertakings. They were sometimes given what were called relaxations. I wrote to Wessex Water and, as I practise law, I found out what the regulations meant in my constituency. I have here a list from the Department of the Environment. It states that Bristol Water must install treatment for pesticides by 1997. The date by which steps are to be completed for nitrides was 31 December 1995. How long before ammonia is to be removed from the drinking water in my constituency? The deadline is 31 December 1995. As for aluminium, it had only to investigate the extent of failures to comply with the appropriate standards and identify remedial work, and it has until 31 December 1994 to do so. There is no date for iron—steps are on-going. As for lead, it must identify zones by 31 December 1994.

Is that a record of success? We are told that coliform must be removed by 31 March 1990, which is an amazing admission, because legislation dated the year before made

[Ms. Jean Corston]

a legal presumption against the presence of coliform in drinking water in any event. That is a weird deception, and also a dereliction of duty by the Government.

People in my constituency are now paying ever higher prices for a product which many of them will never drink because they are worried about what is in it. It is no good accusing politicians of being scaremongers merely because they read aloud figures provided by the company about which the Government boast. That is not good enough. My constituents are being asked to pay by a Marie Antoinette Government, who say, "Let them drink Perrier."

8.54 pm

Sir Anthony Durant (Reading, West): I first apologise to the House for not being here for most of the debate. I was attending meetings, and I apologise for arriving at this late stage. I am delighted, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you called the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Ms. Corston), who had waited for so long.

When debating the water industry, we need to consider its history. We must realise that most of the capital investment in the industry—in sewerage and water purification—took place in the 1800s. Much of the current equipment, especially that for sewerage, dates from that time when the money was first spent. When the Government realised that there was a major problem in trying to put the matter right, they had a choice: they could have introduced enormous levels of taxation and used public money in an attempt to put right an industry which was in a bad state, but they chose the alternative of privatisation, which I support. I believe that it was the right way to proceed.

When the first Bill on water privatisation was introduced, I was not very happy, because one of my interests in life is inland waterways and rivers. It occurred to me that, with the first Bill, there was a danger that issues such as navigation and the conservation of rivers would be neglected. Therefore, I was delighted when the second Bill appeared, setting up the National Rivers Authority.

I believe that the NRA has done a remarkable job. Lord Crickhowell, who was the Secretary of State for Wales, has taken on the job with great enthusiasm. He has prosecuted every water authority. He set out to shake them up—some seriously and some not so seriously. He recently announced that he will tighten regulations on extraction from rivers. There is a particular problem in my constituency with the River Pang, from which Thames Water extracts water. It is now in a serious state. It is a beautiful fishing river, and its condition is a cause of great concern to my constituents, especially those in Pangbourne which is based on the River Pang.

My concern and my criticism of the Government involves the environmental protection agency. I do not wish the NRA to be gobbled up by the agency which the Government proposes to establish. It should keep its role in dealing with water. I do not want the excellent powers being exerted by the NRA to be lost to the agency. Let us keep the National Rivers Authority.

The Labour party talks about renationalisation of the water authorities. Labour admits that it will take 51 per cent. of the stock, which will cost about £8 billion on present prices. It will then have dumped on it £28 billion, which is the current investment programme. All of that will have to come out of the public sector borrowing requirement.

The Labour party does not have a very good record on the water industry. It cut investment by one third when it was in power. Lord Wilson, when he was Prime Minister, appointed Denis Howell as Minister for water. His only success was that, on the day he was appointed, it started to rain, so he felt that he was a successful Minister. It was the same when he was Minister for snow, and the snow stopped the day he was appointed. He had some magic qualities, and had successes in that regard.

I well remember when Denis Howell introduced a water rate equalisation scheme, which other hon. Members may not remember. Wales had bad investment in its water industry because it did not have investment coming in from consumers. The scheme was introduced, and we in the Thames Water area had to pay certain sums to Wales so that it could put its water system right. That did not work, either.

We have the lowest water prices in Europe, which is to the Government's credit, because they have kept prices down. Opposition Members ask why we cannot borrow. If one borrows money, it has to be repaid and one has to pay interest on the amount borrowed, which is another debt to the consumer. The Government are putting money into the water authorities; they put in £2 billion to support the EC directive on clean water, which the hon. Member for Bristol, East mentioned.

The water industry is a good story, and it is getting its house in order. Water is being serviced better, and we have better quality. The rivers are cleaner. Salmon, for example, are now appearing in the River Thames, where they have not been seen for many hundreds of years. The quality of the River Thames, on which I spend a lot of time, is becoming quite clean and is looking very healthy. The NRA is doing a wonderful job there.

It is not all doom and gloom, as the Opposition claim; it is a success story. Of course improvements are expensive; water is expensive, which is one of the problems. People have not realised that one has to pay for water. As the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) said, water is an essential commodity. However, it must be paid for.

All sorts of ideas for helping those on the lowest incomes may be considered, and I am not necessarily against a scheme to assist such people, but we must pay for the water we use. I am in favour of metering, and I want it to be introduced on a much bigger scale.

One of my constituents ran a campaign to get a meter. He refused to pay his water bills because he lived on his own, he used the wash basin only twice a day and he flushed the loo only twice a day. He held out until his water was cut off. When he came to see me in my surgery he said, "Don't get too near me, because I smell." He was determined to get a water meter, because he felt that metering was the right way in which to tackle the water system. In the end, the water authority gave in and provided him with his own water meter. The result was that his bills fell and he paid only for what he used; so his campaign was successful.

I am in favour of water metering. I know that experiments are going on at present, and I shall be interested to see how they work out. There are now

technical ways in which to meter water which do not require great amounts of capital equipment, and I believe that that is the way in which we must go forward.

I am in favour of the Government's policy on water. I believe that it is the right way in which to more forward. I hope that we shall improve the service, as the water authorities intend to do, and that we shall improve the capital investment and especially the sewerage system, which is where most of the capital has to go.

When I became a local councillor, we put in a main sewer because the local council was then responsible for sewerage. Many people said, "Isn't this going to cost and awful lot of money?" A very experienced councillor said to me, "You never get any complaints about spending money underground, but if you flush the loo and the sewage does not go away, you have a riot on your hands." We must have investment in our water industry, and the water companies are investing £2 billion. I hope that that will provide both the quality of the water, which the hon. Member for Bristol, East mentioned, and an efficient sewerage system.

9.3 pm

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) refer to Denis Howell, who was appointed Minister of drought, as some called the post, in 1976. I bitterly regret that the Labour Government did not do anything then to introduce the proposal for a national water network. It is appropriate that this debate takes place during the week in which the chairman of the National Rivers Authority is threatening to prevent water companies from abstracting water from certain rivers. Last year I spoke to people in Sussex, Dorset and other parts of the south country who were worried about the drought in the south of England. Sixteen years have passed by, but nothing has been done.

What concerns me—I have said this before, but it needs stating again—is that there are never any benefits from privatising a monopoly. Let us make no mistake about it. Since denationalisation of the water industry there has been no commensurate reduction in prices, and no improvement in services or quality.

Many people will point out that vast investment is required to bring water standards up to the quality required by European Community regulations. When the industry was nationalised, there was always the possibility that a water network would be built. We are now in the ridiculous situation of facing the threat of standpipes in the south and south-east while there is a glut of water in the north. The Kielder reservoir was built in the north-east at a time when a tremendous increase in industrial use was expected, especially on Teesside. That reservoir provides water to the rivers Tyne, Wear and Tees, from which water can be abstracted, but that is as far as it goes. There has even been talk of exporting water from the north-east to increase revenue for the Northumbrian water authority.

When one thinks about what will be necessary to improve supply and prevent the threat of drought in the south, it is a worrying scenario. We all know that every private company is required by law to look after the interests of its shareholders first and customers next. Imagine the wrangling that will be involved if a pipeline is to be built to bring water from the north to the south of England—it almost defies imagination.

As the years go by, the problem will not be resolved because there seem to be irreversible changes in the water tables and in rainfall patterns, and there is a burgeoning population in the south. Eventually the private companies will return to the Government with a begging bowl. I do not think that any private company would be willing to invest money when a service is involved. They will invest money for a return on their capital—there is no problem about that—but will not invest in such a large-scale project. That was why so many industries were nationalised. It was not because they had been marvellous successes and the Government wanted to take them over for the benefit of the people, but because they were inefficient and were not providing adequate and suitable services.

I forecast that the Government will have to take action if we have another two or three years of low rainfall and problems with drought and lowering water tables. I do not believe that the private water companies are capable of agreeing among themselves to provide a national water network, which is the only possible long-term solution to the problem.

I hope that in the years ahead I shall not have the dubious pleasure of looking back on these words and saying that I was right. I should love to be proved wrong, but I do not think that that will happen.

9.7 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I am glad to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) and that he caught your eye at this late hour, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Minister of State made a rather cantankerous and nagging speech. He unwisely quoted an opinion poll, but he spoke well on sewerage. He gave way frequently, but not to my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon). He made an important statement regarding his intentions on water management. However, work on the London ring main was started before privatisation.

All of us in the Chamber at the time heard the Minister say that the framework of the water industry is working as intended, which was a strange and provocative statement for Opposition Members.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) denounced the sale of the century. He said bluntly, in his typical style, that the privatisation was a scandal. I shall not follow him and discuss Scottish matters.

The hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) conceded that prices had risen and that, in some respects, hardship had ensued. He at least, gave way to my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax. Clearly, he welcomed the debate, which contrasted greatly with the Minister of State's tardy response to it.

The hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) made a sharp speech. He felt that Conservative Members should have worn sackcloth and ashes when they spoke today. He said that there was no competition in the industry. He referred to the Minister of State as an organ grinder and thought that Her Majesty's Government were selling off the family silver.

The Conservative Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) said that we should not aim for perfection at whatever cost. He linked investment in the industry with the need for investment in the third world, which was a challenging concept.

[Mr. Barry Jones]

My hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) argued that there was little support for water privatisation among the electorate, and he is surely right. He argued for a national strategy for the industry. The whole thrust of his speech was that there is no such strategy. He concluded by denouncing the water authorities' licence to print money, which was given to them by the Government.

We understand why the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) made an animated speech, because he predicted that water charges in his region would increase by between 15 and 20 per cent. He described that as an outrage, which had caused a great deal of anger in his constituency. He said that his region at least needed some fine tuning, and he prayed in aid John Hampden and ship money.

Many of us enjoyed the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies). It is nice to welcome him back to the House and to hear his first speech as the hon. Member for that constituency. His predecessor was the much-liked James Lamond, who chaired some of the proceedings on the Water Bill. My hon. Friend has brought with him a handsome majority. Until recently, he was the distinguished secretary of the parliamentary Labour party and of the parliamentary committee. In the previous Labour Government, he undertook an important role most successfully and I enjoyed serving alongside him. Today was the first time he had spoken in the House for 13 years. With his typical humour, he said that he was a fit and active hon. Member who did not need a level playing field, a kick start or a retread. All of us who heard him know that he will serve his constituency honourably, conscientiously and successfully.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) made a spirited speech. He was perhaps the only hon. Member who did not overlook the contribution of the employees in this important industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) made a strong plea for a much-needed open space in her constituency which supports a wide variety of birds. She argued strongly against what she described as potential asset-stripping.

The hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) anticipated a staggering increase in the demand for more and more water. By implication, he was calling for a strategy from the Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson) said that we had won the argument, even if his team had lost the soccer match today, by rather a large margin, against the lobby correspondents. My hon. Friend made a strong speech defending the interests of his constituents, who are already getting a good service from him. My hon. Friend, typically, spoke on behalf of poor people and said that price rises in the industry were going through the roof.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) denounced what he rightly saw as the strategic decision of placing the burden on the poorer consumer. My hon. Friend seeks greater accountability in the industry, and I agree with him. He said that Ministers sheltered behind the water companies and the regulator.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) rightly denounced the poll tax.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Ms. Corston), like others in the debate, talked about the important subject of water quality. She pointed to the increasing sales of drinking water and said that such purchases were not just a question of style or the fads of yuppies. Her conclusion, with which I agreed, was that it showed the suspicion of many people in her area about the quality of drinking water.

On the issue of investment in the water industry, the chairman of Welsh Water, John Elfed Jones, is on record as saying that the only reason for his conversion to privatisation was the belief that it would free Welsh Water to invest in the water industry in Wales. In fact, a great deal of money has been used for other investment—for example, for the purchase of a 15 per cent. shareholding in South Wales Electricity and for buying five luxury country house hotels.

Without doubt, more money is being invested in the industry in Wales. That is welcome, although in some respects it is an indictment of the low level of investment by the Conservatives in the decade from 1979 onwards. The current investment is at massively increased cost to the water consumer. Before privatisation, it was said that investment would be financed partly by central Government and partly by local consumers. Now the whole burden is shouldered by the consumer. That represents another flat rate tax without regard to ability to pay, and it increases the burden on the ordinary family.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East said, water privatisation focused public concern on the state of drinking water, the quality of which in the United Kingdom has rightly been condemned by the European Commission. In Wales, according to the latest report of the drinking water inspectorate, 27 per cent. of water supply zones do not meet the Government's standards for lead, 19 per cent. for coliforms and 15 per cent. for aluminium. The water industry has had to admit that in 1995, 10 years after the original deadline set by the Commission, water supplies to thousands of households throughout Wales will still breach European standards. It is also calculated that 295 km of Welsh rivers and canals are classified as poor or bad by the National Rivers Authority.

Ofwat's accountability has also been mentioned. In Wales, people are concerned at the water industry's lack of public accountability directly to the Welsh people. On matters relating to the water industry in Wales, Ofwat should be directly accountable to the Secretary of State for Wales. That is what Labour Members repeatedly called for in Committee. Instead, it is clear that the Welsh committee of Ofwat reports to the director general, who in turn reports to the Secretary of State for the Environment. So once again, accountability for matters of direct concern to the people of Wales has moved to London. Ownership and regulation of Welsh Water now rest in London, and no longer in Wales—as they should.

Ofwat's powers in respect of water disconnection have been called into question. Last year, the director general of Ofwat expressed concern about the large number of disconnections by Welsh Water. The latest figures, published only two years ago, show that Welsh Water disconnected more customers than any other water company. I am sorry to tell the House that last year alone 2,938 households were disconnected. The fact that Ofwat has—only now—decided to investigate the problem has

rightly caused concern. Many people in Wales wonder what the director general has been doing for the past 12 months.

Will the Secretary of State for Wales launch an investigation into those disconnections? In so doing, he will ensure that Welsh water issues are in his hands, which is what we want. We do not want them in the hands of the Secretary of State for the Environment. It would also ensure that the social and economic problems faced by many households in Wales are taken fully into account.

At this stage in the debate, I should like to mention the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. It is rightly concerned about the rate of water disconnections and says in its submission to Ofwat that there is a need for further safeguards against disconnection for certain groups of customers, particularly the elderly, the disabled and the many households with children.

Water disconnection is a punitive measure which will only increase hardship, and it should not be used where consumer non-payment is a result of poverty. People in Wales know all about poverty. The House may not know that the average household income in Wales is lower than anywhere else in Britain and earnings are among the lowest in the United Kingdom. Nearly 30 per cent. of men working full time earn less than £200 a week, and more than 30 per cent. of women working full time earn less than £150 a week. Those worrying statistics are apposite to the debate. So, too, are the unemployment statistics. In Gwent the unemployment rate is more than 11 per cent., in Gwynedd it is some 13·7 per cent., in Mid Glamorgan some 25,900 people are out of work, in the Rhondda 3,978 people are out of work, and in South Glamorgan more than 15,000 people are out of work in the great city of Cardiff.

People who are out of work find paying their water charges a major problem. The Government's set formula has been responsible for the huge increase in water prices. Since water privatisation, Welsh Water's charges have increased by 44 per cent. Last year they increased by 16·2 per cent. Welsh Water has made much of the fact that it will raise its prices by only 5 per cent. above the rate of inflation next year, but as the *Financial Times* asked the other day, will that self-imposed price cap keep the regulators off the company's back or is it just further proof of how generous the Government were when they set Welsh Water's K allowance?

Taxation is being privatised. Water privatisation is only part of a wider shift in the tax burden, which is affected by water, electricity, gas and telephone charging policies. They have all shifted the burden away from direct taxation towards direct charges which do not reflect ability to pay.

I have read, as other hon. Members probably have, about water from Wales going to other districts to alleviate water shortages. The chairman of Welsh Water has said that he would expect a good rate of return to Welsh Water from any such plans. I hope that Welsh Water customers, rather than the company, will benefit in reduced charges and better services. The people of Wales want assurances that any such scheme will not lead to further flooding to increase the capacity of reservoirs.

The Labour party believes that the Welsh Water authority must get its priorities right. We want it to concentrate on its core activities—to improve water quality and customer service, and keep bills down. Instead, the opposite has happened and Welsh Water has followed a policy of diversification into exclusive country house hotels and stock market bids for South Wales Electricity. In Committee, the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Conwy (Sir W. Roberts) defended privatisation, as we always knew he would, on the grounds that Welsh Water would concentrate on its core activities, but that did not happen.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) has a dossier on disconnections and increased charges. I have seen four such cases. As my hon. Friend told me:

> "Yet another of my constituents has been put into court for one month's arrears in water charges. . . . This particular case was dismissed but only after my old age pensioner constituent was terrified and upset over the prospect of court action."

It is appropriate to pose the question: what is the reality of a water supply cut-off for an ordinary family? In March this year, a young mother in great distress, living in the heart of my constituency, stood at her front door and asked me for help.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Labour Members are perturbed at old-age pensioners being taken to court due to delays in payment of water charges, while the chairman of the Welsh Water authority allows his salary to treble. We think that that is disgusting and deplorable, and it is a result of privatisation.

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend's intervention truly reflects public opinion throughout Wales.

My constituent told me of her four young children, one of whom had a heart murmur, and of her husband who was on income support. As a family, they were in debt to the Welsh Water authority. She said that their water had been cut off and she was beside herself with worry, anxiety and alarm. She asked me what I could do for her children. At the time, I could not answer her. She was concerned for her children, especially the one with the heart murmur. Of course customers must pay their way, but it is wrong that super-rich water authorities should behave like all-powerful juggernauts. The punishment of an individual often entails penalising the elderly, the disabled and the young.

The consequences are severe. To help my constituent and the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda get over their distress, perhaps in preparation Welsh Water will let them stay free at one of its fine luxury hotels. I have the details for one such hotel. The tariff at the Cwrt Bleddyn hotel and country club in Usk displays charges which may seem reasonable to some but are certainly not for others. The hotel charges £160 for a full suite or £125 for a period room. The cheapest menu costs £22·50 per person, but the gourmet menu comes in at £32·50 and includes a warm salad of local wood pigeon as a starter. After that, guests can have saddle of venison with a piquant sauce of orange.

Mr. John Jones, the chairman of the Welsh Water, enjoys a salary of £143,000. It has increased by 211 per cent. since 1989. He has share options which totalled £290,000 by the end of May 1992. Since 1989, bills from Welsh Water have increased by 44 per cent. In the year 1991-92, there were 2,938 domestic disconnections.

Little wonder that, according to *The Guardian*, there has been a wave of criticism of Welsh Water. Its report states that the company has faced criticism from South West Electricity:

[Mr. Jones]

"David Jones, the managing director, said: 'Perhaps it would be better if Welsh Water concentrated on its own business. It already has plenty on its plate in dealing with pollution of our coast line and improving its standard of customer service.'"

It is time for Welsh Water to consider the corporate image that it wants to convey. Can it really defend disconnecting such a necessity of life for the needy while proudly presenting its large and growing profits to the City? Its principle objectives should be a plentiful supply of wholesome water for every household at the lowest possible cost. Four years on, the conflicts between that objective and the interests of shareholders and the constant necessity to make a profit is still evident.

There is still a long way to go in environmental protection, sewage disposal and drinking water standards. So far the record is not good enough, which is why we ask the House to support our motion.

9.33 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): There have been 22 speakers in this debate, which has been characterised by some good humour, a wide range of points and, sad to say, a paucity of Members for most of its duration.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) on his recycled speech. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members who have just entered the Chamber will see what I mean when they refer to *Hansard*. The hon. Gentleman asked us to eradicate from the record three well-known phrases, but his request did not have much effect on his hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), who repeated all three. I shall not do that. I compliment the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton on a clean speech that was delivered virtually without notes. He paid a warm tribute to James Lamond, who was a distinguished member of the Speaker's Panel and much respected in the House. I was under his chairmanship many times. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will make many speeches and I wish him success in the future.

I suspect that by calling the debate the Opposition were trying to promote some total fiction, pretending that they care about the water industry's customers and that the Government do not. Nothing could be further from the truth. They have tried to argue that, in privatising the industry, we disregarded the interests of customers. A major consideration in our decision to transfer the industry to the private sector was the conviction that customers would benefit from improved efficiency and standards and the provision of services at the lowest possible cost. That conviction is being borne out by events.

In privatising the water industry, we were conscious of the risk of creating private-sector monopolies with excessive power over the consumer. That topic has featured in many speeches, and I agree that such power would be totally unacceptable. Therefore, privatisation went hand in hand with the creation of powerful regulators. These were the Director General of Water Services, the National Rivers Authority and the drinking water inspectorate. As a result, we now have the most effectively and comprehensively regulated water industry in Europe, perhaps in the world.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) made a characteristically robust speech. I watched his prowess in the tug of war with great respect and considerable fear. He gave himself a great deal of rope when he clearly said that all the privatised industries should be taken into public ownership.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): That sounds pretty good.

Mr. Hunt: There is a rustle among the leaves below the Gangway, but I did not hear much else.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) spoke about records being broken, but she did not mention the record investment in the water industry. We heard much about the state of the industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), who is not only a non-executive director of a water company but was a Minister in the Department of the Environment, made some salient points about the need for major investment and huge underground renovations. That is especially true in the context of the progress being made in reducing leakage. He stressed that it is vital to renew the nation's assets—and that is precisely what is being done by the record level of investment.

The hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) said that we must learn lessons from other regulators, and I could not agree more. There is a great deal of contact between the different regulators, who have become an indispensable part of the regulation of key industries. We learn a great deal from the way that regulation operates in other industries, and we shall continue to do so.

The hon. Member for North Cornwall made an almost preposterous point when he described Liberal Democrat water industry policy, which was highlighted by my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls). The hon. Member for North Cornwall said that we ought to abolish standing charges. He was challenged to say whether the Liberal Democrats would abolish standing charges for millionaires. At that point, a smile came over the hon. Gentleman's face, and he said, "Of course." As my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge pointed out, there will be a surge of millionaires to north Cornwall, anxious to get their water charges on the backs of everyone else who pays.

Mr. Tyler: The Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) are arguing for means-tested pensions.

Mr. Hunt: Not at all. I do not want to delve too deeply into Liberal Democrat policy, because I would hit bottom very quickly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) made a distinctive contribution. He is proud of Wessex Water's excellent record—and if I may pay tribute to my hon. Friend, he gave a good example of why he is respected as an excellent constituency Member of Parliament.

My hon. Friend pointed out that, contrary to the rumours put about by Labour, 90 per cent. of our rivers conform to EC standards, whereas the figure for the Community as a whole is only 45 per cent.

The hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) also delved into the question of public ownership, and said that he would bring water back into public ownership. My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside pointed out in his excellent speech that we were hearing conflicting noises from the Opposition Benches. That may

be understandable after the election, but it was not justified before the election. No one in the water industry knew what a Labour Government would have done to the industry. The voices of Provan and of Carlisle confuse us even more.

We then heard an excellent contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge, who represents his constituents vigorously. He has done so for some time, and I am sure that he will continue to do so. We realise the strength of feeling among his constituents on these key issues. My hon. Friend has made a number of points to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who I am sure will bear them in mind.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) put the record straight. It is no use the Opposition saying that the necessary investment would be made under public ownership, when that never happened. The Labour Government cut investment in the water industry by 21 per cent.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: I know that the guilty men will refuse to acknowledge that.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Despite the number of times that we have repeated the figures, the Secretary of State has not grasped the basic fact that investment in the water industry under the last Labour Government averaged £1,254 million a year, compared with pre-privatisation investment under the Conservatives of £922 million a year. It was 1987 berfore spending by a Conservative Government reached even the worse year under the last Labour Government.

Mr. Hunt: Having made the longest speech——

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Withdraw.

Mr. Hunt: No, I shall not do that, because what I said was true. Having made the longest speech in the debate, the hon. Member for Dewsbury is now making the longest intervention, and getting nowhere. It is a fact that the Labour Government cut investment in the water industry by 21 per cent.

Let me now deal with the points that were made by the hon. Member of Alyn and Deeside about Wales. Will he please inform his hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) that, in the past year, investment in the Welsh water industry has amounted to £189 million. Next year, it will be £200 million. Let us compare that with the level of investment in 1978-79, the last year in which Labour held office. In real terms—*[Interruption.]* I know that the hon. Member for Dewsbury does not want to hear. In real terms, investment is now 80 per cent. higher.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: No, I will not give way.

Let me tell the hon. Members for Alyn and Deeside, for Delyn (Mr. Hanson) and for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) that we have an extremely successful water company in Wales. It is the largest indigenous company that we have, and we all are very proud of it —except some Opposition Members.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Hunt: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to answer points made by the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North during the debate, not all of which he attended?

For every £100 that Welsh consumers pay in water charges, Welsh Water spends £108 on improving services and upgrading water quality. In the coming year, it will spend £117 for every £100 spent by consumers.

Mr. Wray: What secret plans have the Government for the privatisation of Scottish Water?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman cannot drag me into the Scottish debate. We are dealing with England and Wales; my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has made the position relating to Scotland absolutely clear.

Yes, Welsh Water's profits have risen to £138 million, but only £30 million goes to shareholders in dividends. There are 65,000 shareholders, the majority of whom are Welsh Water customers and employees: 99 per cent. of employees own shares in the company.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: I have still not responded to many of the points made in the debate.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) asked about prepayment meters. I can tell him that the director general of Ofwat is considering that aspect carefully. As from April 1992, increases in water charges have now been restored to the index used to uprate income-related benefits.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman), in a marvellously robust speech, said that, although the Opposition's motion talks of alarm, we could have been fooled, because at the time he spoke very few Opposition Members were present.

The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) referred to salaries for top executives in the water industry. The hon. Lady is not here at the moment, but, as the water industry faces the challenges of the future, it is vital that it has the best possible people in management positions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) displayed an extensive knowledge of the water industry. He asked about the new methods of charging, which is another aspect being considered by the director general.

The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) said that, like the House of Commons, the director general of Ofwat did not have much power. He is wrong, because the director general has extensive powers. If the hon. Gentleman considered them, he would realise their extent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) put the record straight when he pointed out that, notwithstanding stories to the contrary, Blackpool's bathing water is improving all the time. I shall refer the points that he made on coastal protection to my right hon. Friend.

The hon. Member for Bristol, East (Ms. Corston) made many points which I can and will refute, but I do not have the time to do so now. I shall simply say that many of the points that she made justified increased investment in the water industry, the key to which is privatisation which will make that investment possible.

[Mr. Hunt]

My hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) has extensive experience in the water industry and his points on metering will be borne in mind by the director general. My hon. Friend stressed once again the enormous investment of £28,000 million in the water industry which is mentioned in the Government's amendment.

The hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) took us down memory lane with references to Denis Howell and the drought, reminding us that the problems have not gone away. The important thing now is that we have a regulating body. Yesterday, the National Rivers Authority proved that it has powers to act.

What have we learnt from the Opposition today? I must tell the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside that we have not learnt a lot. I am intrigued as to why a debate on water should have been chosen by the Opposition on such an important day in the parliamentary calendar. I went out of the Chamber for a few moments to the Members' Lobby, where I met a group of Members and some members of the press lobby. When I asked why we were debating water, I was told that it had something to do with the elections for the shadow Cabinet. The Government welcome the debate, because we are proud of our record on water.

What else have we learnt from the debate? We have learnt that the divisions on the Opposition Benches on public ownership have not disappeared. Those divisions have been evident during the debate. Those who want to see water returned to public ownership have failed the test for the new model Labour party. Their politics is still rooted in the past.

Mr. Barry Jones: Is it not true that the Minister for the Environment and Countryside said that he did not want this debate and that the Secretary of State was too afraid to come to the Dispatch Box?

Mr. Hunt: No, my hon. Friend did not say that he did not want this debate. We have been trying to discover why water is so high on the list of the Opposition's priorities. I may have the answer. Into my hands has come a document entitled, "The First Fifty Days". It was obviously produced just before the general election. It says:

"The new Labour government will not only face a ruined economy but also a deteriorating environment. We will act swiftly while taking the fullest possible expert advice. Our initial period in office will be crucial and will set the tone for the whole administration. In our first 50 days of environmental action we hope to stop the decline and reverse the trend by . . . Neil Kinnock's attendance at the UNCED conference in Rio."

So the attendance of the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) in Rio was obviously to be the answer.

There is only one reference to water in that document. It says that a Labour Government would set up

"a beach quality phone line."

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): Will the Secretary of State let us into a little secret? Just between these four walls, will he tell the House what he thinks of a situation in which a few directors sit around a table and give themselves these massive pay increases?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman has not been present during the debate. If he had been here, he would have heard my hon. Friends make point after point about the success of the water industry.

The problem is that the Opposition do not like success. I know that they are used to failure. What would they be saying now if the privatisation had not produced the success that it has with the highly successful privatised water companies? They would be deploring privatisation as a failure. In fact, privatisation has been a great success and we are proud of it.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the Secretary of State comment on the fact that Welsh Water spent the £250 million of taxpayers' money which was injected into the company on privatisation, has invested in country house hotels which are losing money and is involved in street cleaning, together with a French company, from which it has had to withdraw? What will the Secretary of State say about the failure of the diversification movement?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman must ask why every water consumer in Wales receives £108 worth of investment in the water industry—in this coming year it will be £117—for every £100 paid in charges. It is because Welsh Water is a successful company. Every time the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside goes into a Welsh Water hotel and purchases a meal—he described it as venison with orange, an appalling prospect—he knows that the money will be used to improve investment in the water industry.

Mr. Barry Jones *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. We cannot have two hon. Members on their feet at the same time.

Mr. Hunt: We have won the argument. I urge the House to throw out the motion.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 274, Noes 317.

Division No. 33] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Adams, Mrs Irene	Burden, Richard
Ainger, Nicholas	Byers, Stephen
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*	Callaghan, Jim
Allen, Graham	Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)*
Alton, David	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*	Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Armstrong, Hilary	Canavan, Dennis
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Cann, James
Ashton, Joe	Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Austin-Walker, John	Chisholm, Malcolm
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Clapham, Michael
Barnes, Harry	Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Battle, John	Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Bayley, Hugh	Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Beckett, Margaret	Clelland, David
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Coffey, Ms Ann
Bennett, Andrew F.	Cohen, Harry
Benton, Joe	Connarty, Michael
Berry, Roger	Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Betts, Clive	Corbyn, Jeremy
Blair, Tony	Corston, Ms Jean
Blunkett, David	Cousins, Jim
Boateng, Paul	Cox, Tom
Boyce, Jimmy	Cryer, Bob
Boyes, Roland	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Bradley, Keith	Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*	Dafis, Cynog
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*	Dalyell, Tam

Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, William
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Michael
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoff
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Ms Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Khabra, Piara
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
MacDonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oliner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Thomas McAvoy and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric

Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MADAM SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the Government on its highly successful policy of privatising the water industry, which will lead to £28 thousand million investment on water and sewerage infrastructure, maintaining the quality of drinking water, improving rivers, and reducing discharges into the sea, thereby benefiting customers and the environment alike; and welcomes the action of the National Rivers Authority to safeguard the water environment and the role of the Director General of Water Services as the powerful independent regulator to provide effective protection for the interests of all the industry's customers.

Mr. James McColm

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Would those hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber please do so very quickly and quietly so that I may call the hon. Member who has the Adjournment debate?

10.17 pm

Mr. Brian Donohoe (Cunninghame, South): Thank you for calling me this evening, Madam Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Will those hon. Members who are holding meetings please do so outside the Chamber, and let the doors be closed so that the hon. Member who has the Floor can be heard?

Mr. Donohoe: I am grateful to you for allowing me this Adjournment debate, Madam Speaker. The case before you is that of Mr. James McColm. I am also indebted for the assistance of the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and of my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook).

At 12.30 pm on Sunday, 9 July, 1989, Mr. James McColm who was 69 years old and a war veteran, having been injured in the famous battle for the bridge at Nijmegen in 1944, was walking home from the local masonic club, having enjoyed a pint and a game of dominoes. Being a victim of emphysema, he was not able to walk fast. He was knocked down on a well-lit section of Townhead street in Stevenston by a local taxi. He died in hospital on 11 July 1989 of injuries sustained in that accident. His sons, Edward and John McColm, could not understand how the taxi had failed to avoid their father. The more questions they asked, the less sense was forthcoming.

According to the police the only witnesses were the driver and a 14-year-old pedestrian, both of whom said that Mr. McColm had crossed the street in the opposite direction to his normal way home. The first question that remains unsolved is why he would cross and then re-cross the same road.

The sons eventually obtained a copy of the post mortem report from Crosshouse hospital where their father died, after it had cleared with the procurator fiscal that they could receive that copy. After consulting someone in the medical profession, it was determined that the injuries sustained were consistent with their father crossing the road as though he was heading home.

Unfortunately, the police had completed their investigation and the procurator fiscal in Kilmarnock had decided that "no proceedings were necessary". Therefore, the driver was not prosecuted and no order was made for a fatal accident inquiry. During that period, meetings were held with the procurator fiscal in Kilmarnock. The first was on 2 August 1989, when John McColm, one of the brothers, and his wife Margaret, had an informal discussion with him. They were shown the witnesses' statements and were informed that the procurator fiscal was preparing to meet the witnesses. My second question is, did he ever meet them?

Sometime after the first meeting, Edward McColm, the other brother, telephoned the procurator fiscal and asked to be supplied with the post mortem report and the witnesses' statements. Both requests were denied to him. The second meeting with the procurator fiscal, held on 19 January 1990, was attended by John and Edward McColm, each with a solicitor.

The sons had prepared a diagram of the accident and a list of questions, which remain unanswered to this day. Where was their father lying? What was the position of the car? Where was the witness standing? Were there any other witnesses? The brothers were of the opinion that there were at least two other witnesses from the Kilmarnock area and, because of that, they advertised in the local paper, the *Kilmarnock Standard.* To this day no witnesses apart from the original two have come forward.

The procurator fiscal said that he could not provide any of the information requested and that he was obliged to give only the names and addresses of the witnesses to the accident. He stated that to give the reasons for his decision or to supply any of the information that he had would be against the public interest. How can that be?

How do the brothers know that the procurator fiscal and the police have carried out their duties? How do they know that the Lord Advocate has carried out his duties? Edward McColm asked the procurator fiscal those questions to which he replied that "there was a chain of accountability". At that point Edward McColm answered that it was "a closed chain of accountability". It seems wrong that, in the case of James McColm, "no proceedings" is all that need be reported as the decision. No justification is needed by the Crown Office. The brothers have been kept in the dark, the only requirement being that they be given the witnesses' names and addresses.

A number of questions remain unanswered. Why was there no fatal accident inquiry, what damage would be done by releasing the information that the brothers request, and how could giving such information be against the public interest?

Mr. Edward McColm wrote to the Lord Advocate citing annual road death figures for Ayrshire—for Cunninghame and Kilmarnock—for 1989 and 1990 and asked for a breakdown to discover in how many cases fatal accident inquiries had been held and in how many cases the file had been marked "no proceedings." He was informed:

"The statistics required by you are not readily available."

Eventually, in a letter from the Lord Advocate dated 4 February 1992 to David Lambie, the former Member of Parliament for Cunninghame, South, an answer was given, but the number of road accident fatalities reported to the procurator fiscal over the two-year period was shown as 46 cases involving 52 deaths. The chief constable's report, which I gave to the Minister yesterday, for those two years showed the number of fatalities as 51. Was that one death too many for the Crown Office, or was one death missing from the police inquiries? I am speaking of the police reports issued by Andrew Sloan, the former Chief Constable of Strathclyde.

In that letter of 4 February 1992, the Lord Advocate said that Mr. Lambie should know that

"the members of the McColm family have attended at the PF office on three occasions."

In fact, they met on only two occasions, on 2 August 1989 and on 19 January 1990. Those discrepancies are a worrying factor in a case that the brothers are now convinced had led to some kind of cover-up. How is it

[Mr. Donohoe]

possible, from the legal point of view, to demonstrate in such a way as to break down the wall of silence that the brothers assume has occurred in this case?

My understanding of the law is that, if the brothers were so inclined, they could exhume Mr. McColm's body, take it to England and bury it there. They would then be granted a fatal accident inquiry in England and it would be able to examine all the circumstances of the accident in Scotland. Something is basically wrong if that is the true position.

The relatives of Mr. McColm would then be able, having received satisfaction after three years—it will be the anniversary shortly of the beginning of the case—to re-exhume Mr. McColm's body and return it to Scotland for reburial. They would then have had the satisfaction of establishing the facts of Mr. McColm's death. They would feel that their father could rest in peace, and they, at last, could get on with their lives.

The procedural irony between the fatal accident laws of England and Scotland should be addressed as a matter of urgency. This is one of many similar cases where a fatal accident inquiry has been denied by the procurator fiscal.

The Scottish Campaign Against Irresponsible Drivers has been campaigning for several years for the bereaved families of road accident victims to have the automatic right to an inquiry. The view of Isobel Brydie of SCAID was echoed by her colleague, Wendy Moss. Isobel Brydie said:

"Part of the process of getting over a death in a family is finding out the facts. Until they know the facts, the grieving process cannot be completed. There is meant to be a procedure just now for helping next of kin but it simply isn't working."

It is essential that the McColm family find out all the circumstances of their father's death. The only way in which that can happen is if a fatal accident inquiry is held into the death of their father, James McColm.

At this time of commitment to open government, with charters of rights for almost everything, it would be satisfying to all those affected if the Government demonstrated tonight a change of attitude and instructed all the organisations most at fault to end the veil of secrecy. Let us hope that the wall of silence can be broken down. I await the Minister's reply with interest.

10.32 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): The whole House will be grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe), who has done a service by providing for his constituents an opportunity for this matter to be ventilated in the House, which has not happened through the legal process.

Isobel Brydie, to whom my hon. Friend referred, lives in my constituency and in the past six years I have had a long association with the Scottish Campaign Against Irresponsible Drivers. During that time, I have seen two features that appear constantly in such cases and which appear again in this case. The first is the need on the part of the relatives of the deceased for a process which establishes the facts of death. A trial does not necessarily establish those facts and, where there is no trial, there is not even that opportunity.

My hon. Friend is absolutely right to draw attention to the sharp distinction between a fatal accident inquiry in Scotland and a coroner's inquest in England. We have no automatic right to a fatal accident inquiry in Scotland. Indeed, they are very rare and generally involve only accidents caused by the actions of lorry drivers. We do not have the automatic right to a coroner's inquest that would exist if the accident occurred in England.

The second factor that occurs in all such cases and is again demonstrated in this case is the hunger of the relatives to know what is happening in the legal process. Tragically, the legal process gives them no recognition, and the fact that they have no information about whether or when a trial will take place or what might happen adds to their distress.

Tonight we are considering only one case, but every year more than 500 people are killed on the Scottish roads. Were it to happen on one day in one place, we would regard it as a tragedy of the most appalling magnitude. Yet sadly, because individual incidents occur throughout the year, we do not recognise the appalling magnitude of the tragedy. The very least that we can offer those who survive such incidents is that their distress should not be compounded by the insensitivity of the legal process. I hope that the Minister will be able to ease the distress in this case by answering the questions put to him so forcefully by my hon. Friend.

10.33 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): First, I warmly congratulate the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Donohoe) on securing this adjournment debate in the ballot and on his good advocacy on behalf of his constituents.

Before I respond to the points raised by the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), may I express my sympathy to the family of the late Mr. McColm for its tragic loss.

The matters under discussion are important, and I am grateful to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North for having provided me with notice of the points that he wished to raise. I am glad to have this opportunity to address some of the concerns that he has raised on behalf of his constituents, many of which were raised previously by his predecessor, Mr. David Lambie.

It is clear to me that the McColm family believe that the cause of Mr. McColm's death has never been adequately explained; and that the truth might have been arrived at if a public inquiry had been held. The concerns which have been voiced by the hon. Member stem directly from the decision not to hold a fatal accident inquiry, and from the secret way in which, as the McColm family perceive it, the decision was taken. It may assist the House, therefore, if I give a brief outline of the history of the case as I understand it.

Mr. James McColm was involved in a road traffic accident on 9 July 1989, when he was in collision with a taxi. He died two days later without having regained consciousness. The circumstances of the accident were investigated by the police. Statements were taken from witnesses, and a report was submitted to the procurator fiscal at Kilmarnock. Although the police were able to trace only one eye witness to the accident—a 14-year-old boy—that witness was able to give a detailed account of what had happened, as he had been standing directly opposite Mr. McColm before the collision with a taxi.

That witness had seen the taxi approach and had seen Mr. McColm before he stepped on to the road in front of the approaching taxi.

The police examined the taxi to determine whether there were any mechanical defects which might have contributed to the accident. They found none. They also measured the skid marks left by the taxi in order to estimate the speed at which the taxi had been travelling. Estimates of the speed were also provided by the eye witness and two other eye witnesses who were approximately 300 m from the locus but had been passed earlier by the taxi. Those other persons did not witness the actual collision. There was conflicting evidence about the speed of the taxi but, based on that of the eye witness and the evidence from the skid marks, there was nothing to indicate that excessive speed was a contributory factor in this case.

All that information was passed to the procurator fiscal, who has responsibility for investigating sudden suspicious and accidental deaths. In Scotland, there is no such thing as an inquest, and there are no coroners. As I understand the position in England and Wales, inquests are held to establish the cause of death. In Scotland, the procurator fiscal inquires into the cause of death, and fatal accident inquiries are then held to address issues of public concern.

Once the death was reported to the procurator fiscal, his first task was to arrange for a post mortem examination. The hon. Gentleman asked why the post mortem report was not made available. My understanding is that the first brother to visit the procurator fiscal was allowed to read the post mortem report. As a general rule, procurators fiscal do not provide copies of reports, but consent to the pathologist making the report available. In this case, the pathologist found injuries to both the left and right sides of the body. I am told that that is not inconsistent with the description of the accident from the eye witness who spoke of Mr. McColm stepping into the path of the taxi, by which time he was almost facing it.

The words of the eye witness that constitute the critical evidence in a statement to the police were as follows:

"The car would only have been about 10 metres away from the man (ie the deceased) when he turned round quickly and stepped onto the road. It took him two steps to reach the road and the second one took him into the path of the car. By this time he had turned so that he was almost facing it."

He was struck on the legs and thrown up in the air before landing on the bonnet of the car and then falling on to the road.

As is normal practice, the procurator fiscal then conducted his own inquiry into the circumstances of Mr. McColm's death. He interviewed the witnesses and also met one of Mr. McColm's sons, who was told in detail what each witness had said. Mr. McColm's son was given an opportunity to read the post mortem report, and he was provided with a list of the names and addresses of the witnesses to enable him to interview them personally if he wished to do so. The procurator fiscal explained the standard of evidence required to justify a criminal prosecution, and he outlined the circumstances in which Crown counsel might feel justified in instructing that a fatal accident inquiry be held.

Once the procurator fiscal had completed his inquiries, he submitted a report to Crown counsel, who had to decide on behalf of the Lord Advocate whether the procurator fiscal should be instructed to hold an inquiry.

In terms of the Fatal Accidents and Sudden Deaths Inquiry (Scotland) Act 1976, there are only two categories of death for which a fatal accident inquiry must be held: a death in custody and a death which has resulted from an accident where the deceased was in the course of his employment. The circumstances of Mr. McColm's death did not fall into either category. In addition to the mandatory inquiries, the Lord Advocate may direct that an inquiry be held where a death was sudden, suspicious or unexplained or has occurred in circumstances such as to give rise to serious public concern.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the Minister give way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have much to say, and I should like to answer the questions posed.

The Lord Advocate will so direct when he is satisfied that it is expedient in the public interest that an inquiry should be held into the circumstances.

The discretion of the Lord Advocate in this matter has long been recognised. The Lord Advocate was given this discretion in 1906, and it was continued by the 1976 Act, which consolidated the legislation and modernised the procedures. In the exercise of his discretion, the Lord Advocate acts in a quasi-judicial capacity when deciding whether or not an inquiry should be held.

At the conclusion of a fatal accident inquiry, the sheriff has to make a determination setting out where and when a death took place, and the cause of the death. These are the formal findings. Of greater significance—and the reason why an inquiry will be held—are the sheriff's findings in relation to any reasonable precautions whereby the death or any accident resulting in the death might have been avoided. In appropriate cases, the sheriff may also determine that there were defects in a system of working which contributed to the death or any accident resulting in the death.

In the case of road traffic fatalities, a fatal accident inquiry would normally be held only if it was thought that there was a need to inquire into such matters as the layout of the road, the appropriateness of any speed limits at the locus, or the adequacy of street lighting. In other words, do the circumstances of the accident give rise to concerns about road safety? Where it is considered that the driver of a vehicle was at fault to the extent that his driving was thought to have been careless or reckless, the appropriate step is for criminal proceedings to be instituted. Where criminal proceedings are not appropriate and no issues of road safety are raised, a fatal accident inquiry will not usually be held, especially where the investigations by the police and fiscal have already clearly established the circumstances leading up to the accident.

In Mr. McColm's case, Crown counsel acting on behalf of the Lord Advocate had to decide whether it was necessary in the public interest that an inquiry should be held. Crown counsel concluded that the circumstances were not unexplained and that they did not give rise to any serious public concern. Crown counsel therefore instructed that an inquiry should not be held. It is that decision which has angered the hon. Gentleman's constituents. I should also confirm, for the avoidance of doubt, that Crown counsel was satisfied that there was no case for taking criminal proceedings against the driver of the taxi.

When the decision was intimated to the family, one of Mr. McColm's sons complained that the fiscal had not

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

been willing to provide him with a copy of either the police report or the fiscal's report to Crown counsel. A meeting was arranged, and both Mr. McColm's sons attended at the fiscal's office in January 1990. As the hon. Gentleman said, this was the second meeting; and I can confirm that there were only two meetings and not three, as was mistakenly mentioned in the letter to which the hon. Member referred.

As I have explained, the family had already been given details of the evidence available to the fiscal. In addition, I understand that the solicitors representing the family had themselves obtained statements from the witnesses. Accordingly, Mr. McColm's family were in possession of the same information about the circumstances of the death as was available to the fiscal and Crown counsel. No material information was withheld from the family. They remained dissatisfied, however, because they had not been shown the police report or the fiscal's report. The police report was simply a summary of the evidence, the details of which had already been provided to the family.

The fiscal's report was accompanied by the statements of the witnesses, but was itself an assessment of that evidence and a recommendation by the fiscal to Crown counsel as to whether a fatal accident inquiry should be held. The fiscal is clearly entitled to make an assessment of the evidence and offer his opinion to Crown counsel on a confidential basis. It was for Crown counsel to decide whether a fatal accident inquiry should be held, and he was not bound to accept the fiscal's recommendation.

By this stage, the circumstances of this case had been drawn to the attention of the then Lord Advocate, Lord Fraser of Carmyllie. Lord Fraser himself reviewed the available evidence and concluded that the circumstances did not meet the criteria set out in the 1976 Act. Lord Fraser was therefore satisfied that a fatal accident inquiry should not be held.

The circumstances of Mr. McColm's death had therefore been carefully and thoroughly investigated by both the police and the fiscal; and the results of those inquiries had been given careful consideration by both Crown counsel and the most senior Law Officer in Scotland. Nothing material had been withheld from the family. They were not provided, however, with copies of the reports in which those investigating the circumstances had offered assessments of the evidence and opinions as to the course of action which should be taken.

As Lord Fraser explained in correspondence with the hon. Gentleman's predecessor, there is a long and unbroken line of judicial authority to the effect that reports by the police to the fiscal and communications between the fiscal and Crown Office are very highly confidential. The Scottish courts will order their production to a third party only where it is necessary for the ends of justice in view of some great and overwhelming necessity. Lord Fraser concluded that, in the circumstances of this case, there was no such necessity, especially as the actual reports sought by the family did not contain any factual information which had not been made available to the family.

Fatal accident inquiries are instructed where the circumstances of the death give rise to serious public concern—as, for example, in cases where there is a continuing danger. The Lord Advocate was satisfied that in this case the circumstances, while tragic, did not give rise to any serious public concern. There are occasions when inquiries are instructed where the death is unexplained and it is thought that a public inquiry might shed some light on the circumstances, but in this case there was no reason to believe that an inquiry could conceivably add anything to the information available to the family as a result of the investigation by the police and fiscal and the investigation by their own solicitors.

Inquiries are the exception rather than the rule. I shall give some figures. Over a two-year period, in 1989 and 1990, 46 cases in Kilmarnock involving 52 deaths were reported to the fiscal, who inquired into the circumstances. In 19 of those cases, criminal proceedings were taken, and in three a fatal accident inquiry was held.

It is unusual to have both criminal proceedings and a fatal accident inquiry. If there is to be an inquiry, it is usually held after the criminal proceedings, if any, have concluded. The need for an inquiry would always be reassessed at that time, as it is likely that the circumstances of the death could have been sufficiently established in the course of the criminal proceedings.

In most cases where no proceedings were taken, either there was an accident which did not involve any other vehicle, or the deceased was at fault. In such cases it would be unusual to hold an inquiry, because either the circumstances will be clearly established by the fiscal's investigation or there is no serious public concern.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for pointing out the discrepancy between the fiscal's figures and those of the chief constable. I made detailed inquiries and discovered that the difference is accounted for by one case where the deceased suffered a fatal heart attack before losing control of the car. I understand that, as this was a death from natural causes, the police have not recorded it as a road traffic fatality. I shall pursue that matter, and will write to the hon. Gentleman in due course. I assure the House that this tragic matter was thoroughly investigated. I confirmed that material facts were not withheld from his family——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at thirteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 17 June 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL

[Lords] (By Order)

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Earth Summit

1. **Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the role played by the Government at the Earth summit in Rio de Janeiro; and if he will make a statement.

2. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Howard): I refer the hon. Members to the full statement made on Monday by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The successful outcome of the conference, and the constructive role played by the United Kingdom in securing that outcome have been widely welcomed.

Dr. Strang: Is the Secretary of State aware that many scientists take the view that the United Nations convention on climate change and the United Kingdom and European Community commitments to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000 are insufficient to prevent serious global warming? Does the Secretary of State agree with those scientists? If so, will the Government use their presidency of the EC to secure tighter commitments in that area?

Mr. Howard: I have no doubt that some scientists take the view expressed by the hon. Gentleman. He is right to identify the considerable scientific uncertainty that exists in that regard. That is why we place great emphasis on the importance of keeping our commitments under review. They will, indeed, be reviewed and if there is greater scientific unanimity either way, or greater technological information that we can take into account, we shall not hesitate to amend and revise them in the light of that review.

Mr. Bayley: I welcomed the announcement made by the Prime Minister before he went to Rio that he would recycle empty bottles from Downing street by taking them to a bottle bank. Doubtless that will make a significant contribution to the energy-saving commitments given by the Government in Rio. But will the Secretary of State reverse his advice to local authorities that he will give no more supplementary credit approvals for kerbside collections so that local authorities can do the same as the Prime Minister and encourage more people to save glass?

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman examines the details, he will find that local authorities have adequate resources to fulfil their environmental obligations, and the best local authorities are discharging those obligations very effectively.

Mr. David Nicholson: The attitude of the United States Administration to the Rio conference is to be regretted, but will my right hon. and learned Friend say whether the United Kingdom Government played a part in bringing the United States Administration forward in that respect? In particular, what developments took place at Rio with regard to safeguarding tropical rain forests?

Mr. Howard: We certainly played a part in reaching a position that enabled the United States to sign the climate change convention. As the United States is responsible for 25 per cent. of the world's carbon dioxide emissions, it was essential that it signed up to that treaty. The United States took a different view about the biodiversity treaty, but it has agreed to take part in the processes under that treaty. Nevertheless, I hope that it will be possible for the United States to sign up to that convention in due course. After very protracted negotiations we were able to reach an agreement on forests—not a convention as we had hoped, but an agreement that holds open the possibility of moving towards a convention. We shall vigorously pursue the possibilities of reviewing the agreement in that way.

Mr. Harry Greenway: I remind my right hon. and learned Friend that Zaire has two thirds of the world's tropical rain forests. How will any arrangements secure the future of those forests, bearing in mind the pressure on that poor country to use its resources to improve its position and that of its people?

Mr. Howard: I shall send my hon. Friend a copy of the agreement, which sets out in full provisions that will enable progress to be made in Zaire and in other countries and encourage countries to engage in the proper management of their forests, while recognising that it would be foolish to suggest that not a single tree should be cut down and that such countries will not wish to make use of those resources. It is important that we develop a way in which sustainable use can be made of those resources, and that is the objective of the forestry agreement.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Whatever reservations there may be about the Rio summit, may I congratulate the Secretary of State and his team on the signing of the two conventions on biodiversity and climate change? In order to keep up the momentum, will he give an assurance that, during Britain's European presidency—which falls to us from 1 July—we will immediately set about negotiation of the protocols to the conventions and take the lead in ensuring that they are both ratified quickly, and will now sign a like-minded countries' declaration on climate change?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his remarks. I can go one better than he suggests. In his statement to the House on Monday, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that he would write to the other countries in the European Community and to the other G7 countries proposing a follow-up to the conventions that were signed at Rio. The hon. Gentleman can be assured that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Government in general will continue to take a lead in these matters.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the Secretary of State say clearly what the Prime Minister failed to say on Monday—that the Government will accept the target of stabilising carbon dioxide emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000 as a clear commitment with no strings attached? Will he acknowledge that if the Government had accepted that target—for which we have been arguing for many years—earlier, more progress could have been made in combating global warming and indeed in strengthening the hand of the British Government in their negotiations?

Mr. Howard: No. I entirely reject the hon. Lady's suggestion. I do not think that there is any foundation for it at all. When we revised our commitment just a few weeks ago and committed ourselves to bringing down emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000, we made it clear that we would do that if other countries took similar action. It is important to appreciate that this is a global problem which requires a global response. It is as important to secure multilateral, rather then unilateral, action in this matter as it was in respect of disarmament, when the stand taken by Her Majesty's Government proved to be effective, in contrast to the stand urged upon us by the Opposition.

Rural Housing

3. **Mr. Ancram:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further measures he proposes to introduce to stimulate the provision of affordable housing for local people in rural areas.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Sir George Young): We have taken a series of measures since 1988 to boost supply of low-cost housing in rural areas to enable local people to stay in the areas where they have grown up. We have substantially increased public resources, through the Housing Corporation, for new investment by housing associations. In addition, the Housing Corporation and local authority special rural programmes should together provide around 3,400 units this year. New planning guidance permits development of low-cost housing for local needs on small sites not otherwise designated for housing.

Mr. Ancram: I welcome the current initiatives, but does my hon. Friend accept that the continuing lack of affordable housing in a constituency such as mine severely restricts the choice in housing that the Government are seeking to promote? Will he look for new ways of bringing together the public and private sectors, including housing associations, housing trusts, building societies and local councils, to promote joint schemes that can provide local housing for local people at rents and prices that local people can afford?

Sir George Young: I recognise the pressures in my hon. Friend's constituency. He brings to the problems his experience as a former Housing Minister in Scotland, where he pioneered a number of innovative housing measures. On the subject of his own constituency, he will know that, last year, we were able to approve two schemes at Sillington lane, Poushot and at Nether street in Bromham and, this year, an additional scheme at East Grafton. My hon. Friend is right. If real progress is to be made, the co-operation of landowners, housing associations, planners and housing committees, as well as the private sector, will be needed. I am determined to make further progress in that direction.

Mr. Canavan: Does the Minister agree that housing provision in rural areas might be improved if absentee landlords such as the Marquess of Lothian and the Earl of Ancram let out some of their huge country mansions to homeless people?

Sir George Young: My responsibilities stop at the border. The Scottish dimension of politics continues to fox me, so I shall not enter into any local Scottish debates in the Chamber this afternoon.

Sir Anthony Grant: Does my hon. Friend recall that just before the last general election the Secretary of State for the Environment issued a sensible guidance circular to authorities which pointed out that where large settlements or village developments were to take place it was essential to take into consideration the wishes of the people in the locality? Can he confirm that under the new regime that will be rigorously applied?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend refers to planning policy guidance note No. 3, which was issued shortly before the election. It indeed states the Government's policy on new settlements and villages. I reaffirm that where a local authority proposes such developments it must take account of local opinion and ensure that any proposal is with the grain rather than against it.

Mr. Soley: Is not it a matter of some shame that, 13 years after the Government embarked on their absurd housing policy, Government-appointed bodies as well as Conservative local authorities in rural areas condemn them for failing to meet the need for affordable housing? Is not it a fact that in Devizes, the constituency of the hon. Gentleman who asked the question, many Government-owned houses have been lying empty for many years? Why does not the Minister transfer those houses to local authorities and housing associations? Why does he not recognise the Government's failure to deliver affordable properties for rent or purchase, especially in the rural villages of England and around London where there is the problem of the commuter belt? Why does he not use resources, especially from capital receipts from the sale of council houses, which are still unused?

Sir George Young: I do not accept the analysis to which we have just listened. There are 2 million more homes than there were in 1979. There are more homes per 1,000 population than in 1979. The Housing Corporation programme is increasing dramatically. Its output this year is some 54,000 homes—about three times the level of two or three years ago.

The hon. Gentleman will know that there are fresh initiatives on empty MOD stock, including those in the Conservative party manifesto. We are determined to put to good use any surplus stock that the MOD has. However,

the MOD is bringing back a substantial number of troops from Germany and other places. Much of the accommodation that is now empty may be needed for those families.

Contracting-out

4. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to review the prospects for contracting out the functions of his Department.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): Yes. The Department undertook a full examination in 1990 of the prospects for market-testing functions, leading to possible contracting-out. Those prospects have been reviewed by officials, with private-sector assistance, in developing a programme for market-testing in response to the "Competing For Quality" White Paper, and will be continually reassessed.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for his answer. Does he agree that it would be a great feather in the cap of the Secretary of State for the Environment if, instead of looking for new premises elsewhere in London or anywhere else, he set about winding up the whole of his Department? That would be a wonderful example to Whitehall. As housing is now well on the way to returning to the private sector, as the new town corporation is already being wound up, water is already in private hands, and as the countryside would be better looked after by the National Trust or the Country Gentlemen's Association, there is little excuse for carting the enormous Department of the Environment all the way down the river to Canary Wharf.

Mr. Baldry: I know that we are having a particularly tough public spending round this year, but I cannot believe that the Treasury is suborning the likes of my hon. Friend to propose the wholesale closure of Departments. So I can only presume that her question was a freelance bid for a couple of lines in the Matthew Parris column.

Mr. Hardy: The Minister must understand that his hon. Friend has a serious point. Agencies have proliferated, work has been shed and ministerial workloads reduced —at what point will Ministers share the experience of redundancy, which is affecting the rest of the country?

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman might not have noticed that the Department has one Minister fewer than it did before the general election, dealing with the same effective workload.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

5. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals to extend compulsory competitive tendering for local authority services.

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. John Redwood): The Government have recently announced proposals for tendering housing management functions and we are considering the responses to the consultation paper "Competing for Quality: Competition in the Provision of Local Services". My only sadness is that I do not have the pleasure of responding to what I suspect was an attempt by my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) to wind me up.

Mrs. Angela Knight: Whereas competitive tendering is bringing its successes, will my hon. Friend consider reviewing the non-competitive practices still employed by some Labour-controlled local authorities, who are seeking to preserve themselves in overstaffed departments, rather than getting on with the job of repairing roads, mending schools and cleaning the streets effectively and efficiently, which is what local residents want?

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We shall consult about the fairness of the terms of the local authority tendering process because we are determined that tendering should be properly conducted in the interests of the charge payer and the council tax payer next year. We wish to encourage high-quality services, properly managed, delivered at an economic price and that is the purpose of having a level playing field. As I said originally, we shall also consider extensions where we think that that makes sense.

Mr. William O'Brien: Does the Minister still hold the view that compulsory competitive tendering guarantees quality of service and, if so, how does he justify it? Will he ensure that all future contracting documents under the compulsory competitive tendering system include a quality of service paragraph? Will that apply to contracts for refuse collection, catering, school cleaning, recreation facilities and so on?

Mr. Redwood: It is good practice to include quality clauses. I am pleased that independent research has not shown any deterioration in quality as a result of competitive tendering—[HON. MEMBERS: "What?"] Yes, the evidence is there. When properly conducted it could improve quality, because it gives people management control over quality and a right of redress if things go wrong. We want quality services at a sensible price, which is what competitive tendering can deliver.

Housing, South-West

6. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the amount of additional housing that will be required in *(a)* Devon and *(b)* the south-west by the year 2010.

Mr. Baldry: None at the present. We expect to publish, next year, regional planning guidance which will set out the broad scale and distribution of housing provision to be made in development plans in the south-west for a 15-year period.

Mr. Steen: The Earth summit highlighted the problem of over-population and its effect on the environment, and that problem exists in Devon, where the population has increased more and more, not because of an absence of family planning, but simply because successive structure plans have allowed too much housing there. Will the Minister confirm that, in the new Devon structure plan, which is under review, he will not impose more houses on the area just because his officials want him to do so but will do what the local district councils want? Will he also ensure that, if there are any new housing developments, it is the infrastructure that counts and that too many houses are not built, disregarding——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must ask his question and not make statements.

Mr. Baldry: Housing provision for Devon from 1989 to 2001 was discussed, as my hon. Friend knows, at an examination in public held earlier this year. I shall carefully consider the report of the panel conducting the examination in public and all representations and objections, including my hon. Friend's, before making a decision on the amount of housing provision for Devon until 2001.

Residential Staff

7. **Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will take account of the costs of implementing the recommendations of the Howe inquiry into residential staff in relation to pay, training and development, in the revenue support grant settlement for local authorities in 1993-94.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robin Squire): The cost of those new burdens, which the Government accept local authorities necessarily face, including any costs that may arise from the recommendations of the Howe inquiry, will be taken into account when decisions are taken on the revenue support grant settlement for 1993-94.

Mrs. Prentice: I should like to be able to welcome that statement, but, unfortunately, the Minister was unable to say whether those resources will be fully met. Does he agree with me and most other people who are concerned about residential care—whether of children, the mentally disabled or the elderly—that those residents must be looked after with the highest quality of care and that that can be given only by highly motivated and properly trained professionals? Does he not also recognise that it is time that the Government put their money where their mouth is and instead of just talking about community care, gave local councils the cash to provide it?

Mr. Squire: I note what the hon. Lady says. She is probably aware that such detailed matters are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. However, I can tell her that the settlement will reflect both the need for local authority spending and, importantly, what council tax payers and the country as a whole can afford.

Mr. Blunkett: Will the Under-Secretary tell us why the provisional grant settlement has been deferred from July until the autumn? When will the community as a whole be told how much it will receive in grants and allocations from the Department of Social Security so that it can plan ahead? That information is necessary to make community care a reality and to allow authorities to do the essential job of putting the ground work in place and so ensure that the most vulnerable in society do not suffer because of the row between his Department, the Department of Social Security and the Treasury about how much money should be made available.

Mr. Squire: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman's comments. He knows that it is in the general interests of local government and central Government that next year services, not least the provision of care in the community to which reference has been made, and the introduction of the new tax should go through as smoothly as possible. The Government are determined that that will be so and that is why we have announced that the decision will be made in the autumn.

Water Legislation

8. **Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce provisions revising the legislation governing the water industry.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean): The enhanced powers of the Director General of Water Services to monitor performance by water companies and to foster competition, will be brought into effect on 1 July. New powers for the director general to decide various types of dispute between customers and companies will be brought into effect on 1 September.

Dr. Fox: The Minister's response will be extremely welcome in my constituency of Woodspring and throughout Bristol. Is my hon. Friend aware that the proportion of the water industry's profits that now goes to shareholders is lower than the amount of interest that was returned to the Government when the industry was in public hands? The privatisation of water has been vindicated on the ground not only of environmental stewardship, but of pure economics.

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Moreover, as we said in yesterday's debate, the water companies are investing twice as much in the infrastructure as they have made in profits. That is a pretty good record, which is not matched by many other companies in this country.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Does the Minister admit that it is a great pity that the Government did not take the opportunity presented by the recent legislation, which introduces the powers to which he referred, to prevent water companies from introducing compulsory metering? In virtually all cases where meters are installed, those customers, who have no choice about metering, have found that their bills have shot up well above those that are based on the rateable value of customers' houses. If he admits that mistake, we will give him every assistance in passing a quick Bill to prevent compulsory water metering.

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Gentleman misses the point, as did his hon. Friends yesterday. The fact is that the water companies are providing a service to the public that has to be paid for somehow. We have three powerful watchdogs—the National Rivers Authority, the Director General of Water Services and the drinking water inspectorate—which act as regulators to the industry. As we have set up those regulators, it is best to let them get on with their job and not, as politicians, try to interfere with their decisions.

Mr. Rupert Allason: Is my hon. Friend aware of the grave anxiety in the south-west about the water bills that have been sent out by South West Water? Has he any proposals, following the controlled experiment on the Isle of Wight, to recommend or introduce widespread water metering, at least to make certain that high consumers of water pay for the service? The burden should not be transferred to single pensioners living alone who are receiving excessive bills based on water rates.

Mr. Maclean: There has had to be tremendous investment in the infrastructure in the south-west to comply with EC directives and improve the quality of bathing waters around the coast. That has cost a considerable amount, which has had to be paid for by consumers in the area. However, we intend shortly to issue a consultation paper on all aspects of water conservation and how it may be used, distributed and stored. Obviously, water metering will be one of the options canvassed in that consultation paper.

Toxic Emissions, Merseyside

9. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to reduce the risks of toxic emissions and spillages at Shell and ICI plants at Merseyside.

Mr. Maclean: When part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 is fully implemented, all the plant operated by Shell and ICI on Merseyside will have to comply with the requirements of the Act, and this will represent a significant improvement in the regulatory control of all emissions.

Mr. Loyden: The Minister will be aware of the appalling record of both those companies in relation to pollution through spillages and emissions. One of the companies has been fined six times and the other five times. Whatever the Government feel about the regulatory bodies, it appears that they are having no effect on those companies' disregard for pollution in that area. Is the Minister aware that there are many dangerous practices in some of their plants, about which the community is very concerned? As I have requested previously, will he make the reports of the Health and Safety Executive available in the Library so that we can see what its findings were?

Mr. Maclean: There have been some incidents at the Shell and ICI plants at Runcorn, but, in all fairness, the hon. Gentleman should point out the huge size of the plants and the complicated processes that take place there. The new regulatory regime which has come into force in this country, which is operated by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution—integrated pollution control—is revolutionary. It is the first of its kind in Europe and the HMIP is looking into all aspects of the processes operated on Merseyside. They will all come under integrated pollution control. The hon. Gentleman will see that, in time, it will have considerable benefits for all people on Merseyside.

Water Companies (Investment)

10. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account the Office of Water Services takes in its regulation activities of the amount of investment by water companies.

Mr. Maclean: As the water industry is engaged in a massive capital investment programme estimated to cost £28 billion, the Director General of Water Services, as the independent regulator, has a close interest in ensuring that the investment is carried out on time and in an efficient way.

Mr. Jones: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Once again, it underlines the sheer volume of that investment, which amounts to some £960 per household in the years up to 1996. Does he not think, however, that as most of that investment is directed at water quality, it would be appropriate for the Director General of Water Services to consider whether more should be directed at water efficiency and, specifically, at encouraging investment in metering on a voluntary basis in many parts of the country?

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the huge investment being made in the water industry at present. As a rough rule of thumb, it is £5,000 for every minute. My prime concern is that water companies should maintain adequate supplies to consumers while properly managing water resources efficiently and not damaging the environment. All of us could do more to conserve water, and that is why I shall shortly issue the consultation paper, which will canvass views on water conservation, management and use. Metering will be one of the options considered.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Minister address the issue of compound interest involved in the formula, RPI plus K, in which over and above inflation there is an increase of up to 6·5 per cent. per annum of compound interest in the charge made? Surely that should be levelled out and, although there may be justification for retaining the RPI element, surely K must be brought to an end.

Mr. Maclean: That is a matter for Ian Byatt, the director general of Ofwat. He has recently issued a consultation paper, and he will consider the matter raised by the hon. Gentleman when undertaking a review of K in the next few years.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: My hon. Friend will be aware that, notwithstanding the enormous investment in water supply, there will be a great shortage of water for the foreseeable future in some parts of the country. Does my hon. Friend accept that there is an urgent need for a national water grid as, I am told, the national water supply is perfectly adequate for our overall needs?

Mr. Maclean: The water companies have a prime duty to ensure that consumers are supplied with adequate amounts of healthy, wholesome water. In the past few years, those companies have developed river transfer schemes and the elements of a grid. However, I caution my hon. Friend when he suggests that we should have a national grid pumping thousands of millions of gallons of water around the country. We should be wary of doing that on the basis of the huge amount of energy that it would consume. My hon. Friend should not jump to the conclusion that all parts of the country have more than adequate water supplies. One of the rivers that is under threat and is very low is in the lake district; it supplies Lake Ullswater, which supplies Haweswater, which supplies Manchester.

Rented Housing

11. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to make additional financial resources available for the provision of affordable housing to rent.

Sir George Young: We are taking steps to increase supply of low-cost rented housing where it is needed. The

Housing Corporation's capital programme for new development by housing associations will rise to more than £2 billion by 1993-94 from £1 billion for 1990-91. Together with associations' use of private investment on a growing scale, that will increase their output financed through the Housing Corporation to more than 51,000 units a year by 1993-94 from 16,900 units in 1990-91. Deregulation of the private rented sector in 1989 has also led to a welcome increase in private letting.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that, despite what he says, there is a major shortage of affordable housing for rent and a number of housing problems? Will he tell his Treasury colleagues that now is the time to allow local authorities to use their capital receipts to build houses to rent, which would help to solve some of the housing problems, help the industry and also help to start the economy?

Sir George Young: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman understands that if one were to allow local authorities to spend their own capital receipts, that would directly reduce the amount of money that my Department could lend to other authorities—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Otherwise, the net total of public expenditure would increase. If the hon. Gentleman wants to make an argument for increasing public expenditure on housing, he can do so. But simply allowing local authorities to spend their own capital receipts would reduce the funds available to local authorities on the basis of need. We can make much better progress with the resources that we have. There are 80,000 empty local authority homes; 100,000 flats over shops that we are progressively bringing back into use; and we have fresh initiatives to bring back into use 600,000 empty properties in the private sector. As the Audit Commission recently said, we can do far more to help to meet people's housing needs by making better use of the available resources.

Mr. James Hill: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is not just a matter of financial resources? Many local authorities squirrel away large areas of land and wait for money to become available. They will not put them to auction and will not allow anyone else to build low-cost housing for rent. In addition, some local authorities firmly resist allowing the private sector or housing associations entry into the rented market. What can we do to make them release land?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend is right. If he looks at the Audit Commission report published recently, he will see that one recommendation is, indeed, that local authorities should make land available to housing associations. It is inexcusable that local authorities that own land zoned for residential accommodation should sit on it when housing associations can develop it and give the local authority the necessary nominations.

Mr. Betts: Will the Minister admit that the Government's rules on the use of capital receipts by local authorities are nonsense? Is he not aware of the thousands of young people who are homeless, many of whom sleep on the streets of our native cities? Is he not aware of the tens of thousands of young people who are living at home with their parents waiting for a home that does not exist? Is the message to them from his Government that the Government have no heart and offer them no hope?

Sir George Young: I outlined in my initial reply the increased resources that are being made available to the Housing Corporation precisely to meet the needs that the hon. Gentleman has identified. If the Labour party wants us to return to the old regime of capital receipts, that would severely damage authorities in the inner cities that benefit from the new regime. Under the old regime, the receipts tended to accrue in areas that did not have the greatest housing need. Those areas with greatest need did not have the right-to-buy receipts. The advantage of the new regime is that it recycles those receipts on the basis of need. I should be astounded if the Labour party wanted to overturn that policy.

Mrs. Peacock: I welcome my hon. Friend's announcement of increased funding for the Housing Corporation for 1992-93. Will he assure the House that he will take steps so that the north of England receives an equal share of that money and it is not all spent in the south?

Sir George Young: I understand my hon. Friend's point. Recently I met a delegation from the regional equity group and we listened to representations. Because of the increased resources available to the Housing Corporation, all regions are benefiting from an increased allocation.

Charge Capping, Cheltenham

12. **Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the proposed community charge capping of Cheltenham borough council.

Mr. Robin Squire: Cheltenham has issued a formal challenge to the cap that my right hon. and learned Friend proposed for it on 14 May. It has proposed an alternative cap, set at the level of its original budget.

Mr. Jones: I urge the Minister to look closely at the document that Cheltenham council produced. Will he explain to the House how charge capping increases local accountability when it takes away from elected councillors the ability to put into practice the programme on which they were elected and denies the people the high-quality, well-managed services for which they voted?

Mr. Squire: My colleagues and I will certainly think seriously about all the representations made to us by Cheltenham and other authorities before we come to our conclusions. The hon. Gentleman's wider point must be seen against the background of an overwhelming proportion of local authorities that brought in budgets at or below their ceilings. I congratulate them on that. The Government, unlike the Opposition, believe that we have a responsibility to protect charge payers from high-spending authorities and we continue to carry out that responsibility.

Estate Action

13. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the estate action programme.

Sir George Young: The estate action programme now makes a major contribution to tackling the problems of run-down local authority estates. Resources have

increased from £268 million last year to £364 million this year, and I shall shortly be inviting local authorities to submit proposals for new schemes to begin in 1993-94.

Mr. Coombs: Will my hon. Friend accept the congratulations of the House on a scheme that has contrived to spend £640 million in the seven years since it was first introduced on 700 schemes spread over 140 local authority areas, and of which he could lay claim to be the progenitor? Will he look at the publicity for the scheme to ensure that it is brought to the attention of other newer local authorities that may have lesser problems than those of the recipients of money so far? At the same time, will he look at the criteria by which schemes are judged, so that those authorities may also lay claim to some of the resources that he plans to make available?

Sir George Young: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is indeed the case that more than 250,000 homes have been improved under estate action, which has helped to transform the lives of people living on some of our most difficult estates. As I said, I shall shortly be inviting local authorities to bid for the schemes for next year, and I will ensure that information about the estate action programme is widely disseminated.

If there are proposals to change the rules to make better use of the money, I shall be happy to discuss them with local authorities.

Mr. George Howarth: I welcome the continued development of the estate action programme, but since, as the Minister will be aware, a large part of that programme involves tenant participation, how far has his Department's consideration of tenant participation strategy got and when will the report be published? Clearly, one has a bearing on the other.

Sir George Young: We have made some investment in organisations such as the tenant participation advisory service. The proposals that we published last week on competitive tendering for housing management gave tenants for the first time the right to manage, rather than relying on the discretion of a local authority. We are determined to harness tenants associations' energy and enthusiasm as we develop our housing policy. We are keen to see more estate management boards, tenant management organisations and co-operatives taking over responsibility for their estates. That is a theme about which we shall hear a lot during the next four or five years.

Local Government Review

15. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will ensure that full weight is given to local opinion in the forthcoming review of the structure of local government.

Mr. Redwood: Yes. That is most important. Local opinion will be crucial in the local government commission's work programme. I have asked the commission to ensure that there are good arrangements for Members of Parliament to be able to make representations to it on those crucial matters.

Mr. Moss: Will my hon. Friend confirm that a priority of the local government review is to preserve community identity? In the interests of testing real local opinion, does he agree that in rural areas such as Cambridgeshire it would make sense to start at grass roots, at local parish council level, and work upwards, rather than have something imposed from the county council downwards?

Mr. Redwood: It was clear in the legislation passed last Session that the definition of natural communities was an important task of the commission. That is one of the two guiding principles in making recommendations on a new structure. Parish councils should be prepared to have discussions with county and district councils, which will undoubtedly put proposals to the commission to see how the powers under existing legislation can best be used to ensure that strong parish councils wishing to undertake a role in the new structure can do so.

Mr. Barnes: Why does the local government boundary commissioner have to consult the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration when drawing up proposals? Is not that wide open to abuse? For example, Derbyshire is in the first tranche to be investigated under local government, but it is likely to be at the back end when it comes to parliamentary seats. That means that, because of the link between the two, the parliamentary seats will shape the local government provision, rather than the usual practice of local government shaping parliamentary seats.

Mr. Redwood: I do not agree with all the implications behind the hon. Gentleman's question. The purpose of the local government review is to find suitable boundaries and proposals for councils and there can be interaction only if county boundaries are to be changed. All the relevant considerations will be taken into account by the new commission as it goes about its work.

Mr. Pickles: Does my hon. Friend recognise that there is much local concern about reorganisation and that the principal concern is that there should not simply be a replication of existing councils, with either a small county council or a large, super-district council? Will the Government ensure that the review's function is such that we have an enabling council and that a new civic pride is engendered not only in the ownership of services but in the quality of services?

Mr. Redwood: A sense of belonging and of happiness with the proposals in the local community is important, as I have already said in answer to previous questions. The style and method of operating particular councils will be reviewed by the commission in the light of proposals from the councils in the area and in the light of its thoughts about any other options that should be considered. My hon. Friend will have a full chance to influence the commission, as will other hon. Members, when it reaches their areas.

Eco-labelling

16. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the introduction of eco-labels—green labels.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom has strongly supported the development of the European eco-labelling scheme, so I am delighted that the EC regulation is now in place and that arrangements are progressing for launching

the scheme towards the end of the year. We shall continue to press the Commission and the other member states to ensure that this timetable is met.

Mr. Bennett: Will the Minister confirm his green credentials by telling us which washing-up liquid he uses? Will he also confirm that some of the other EC states are still dragging their feet in regard to eco-labelling, and that it would have been far better for this country to go ahead on its own?

Mr. Maclean: I shall come clean in a moment.

The hon. Gentleman fails to grasp the point that if we are to make any real environmental progress, we must do so in concert with other nations. We have a free trading area in Europe, where goods and products are moved around the Community. Without a Europewide eco-labelling scheme—which is now within our grasp—that arrangement would not be as effective as it should be.

In answer to the hon. Gentleman's first question, I believe in being a liberated husband and sharing the household duties; unfortunately, however, washing up is not the duty that has been allocated to me.

Earth Summit

17. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the fiscal and industrial consequences for the United Kingdom of decisions reached at the Rio de Janeiro conference.

Mr. Howard: The impetus for sustainable development resulting from the Earth summit will have significant consequences in many areas of our national life. The Government are committed to reporting regularly on the progress that we make in following up the summit's conclusions.

Rev. Martin Smyth: In the light of that answer, and the attitude of, for example, the United States Government, does the Secretary of State accept that short-term gain might mean long-term ruin—not only for developed countries but, especially, for developing countries?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman is right. That lies at the heart of the whole concept of sustainable development, and I welcome his support for the steps that we have taken.

Sir Anthony Durant: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that any proposed carbon tax ought to be introduced world wide, rather than imposed on countries such as ours in isolation?

Mr. Howard: I am sure that my hon. Friend, who takes a close interest in such matters, will be much comforted to learn that the European Commission's proposals for a carbon tax include an element of conditionality. His concern is reflected in them.

Standard Spending Assessments

19. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to revise standard spending assessments to make them a realistic reflection of local needs.

21. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the planned changes to the standard spending assessment calculation for 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: Standard spending assessments are a realistic reflection of local needs. Discussions with the local authority associations about a few possible changes for 1993-94 began in February. Data from the 1991 census will be incorporated into the assessments as soon as possible, but for most items this will probably be for 1994-95.

Mr. Mitchell: The Minister would need the wisdom of Solomon to devise a national system of assessment that fitted all the circumstances even approximately. Does he concede, however, that the SSAs do a particular injustice to such places as Grimsby? First, they make no allowance for unemployment; secondly, they do make allowance for ethnic communities, which do not exist in Grimsby; thirdly, they make allowance for visiting nights, but unfortunately not many tourists come to Grimsby; and, fourthly, the method of assessing debt repayment has been a particular source of grievance. The difference between the Department's calculation and the sum that Grimsby is actually repaying amounts to £30 to £40 per head on the poll tax. Does not all that make a case for a much more realistic SSA?

Mr. Squire: I am unsurprised by the hon. Gentleman's comments. I pay tribute to him: he asks a good many questions about this subject, and he has asked a good many on this occasion. Let me concentrate on two of them.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned unemployment. As he knows, we judge that unemployment is not a relevant factor in the assessment relating to district-level services. He also raised the question of notional debt. The use of notional debt ensures that all authorities are treated fairly; if we acted otherwise, we would disadvantage authorities that had previously chosen to use capital receipts to repay their debts.

Mr. Bruce: The county of Dorset is excellent at keeping within its spending limits, and it is a debt-free county. It is often felt that, when the Government set the SSA, Dorset is treated unfairly simply because it is a good Tory authority. The community care budget in particular will have to be increased considerably in all counties—especially in counties such as Dorset, which contain large numbers of elderly people. Will my hon. Friend ensure that the new SSA for Dorset will be generous, and that an early indication is given of when it will apply?

Mr. Squire: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I sympathise with some of his points. He will have heard my earlier answer on community care: the Government will not make an announcement until the autumn. However, to repeat something that I said a few moments ago, standard spending assessments are calculated according to general principles and are applied in the same way to all authorities. One of the reasons why my hon. Friend's local authority will receive a relatively lower SSA is that, by most measurements of need, it does not have the same degree of need as other areas with higher SSAs.

County Hall, London

20. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the future of county hall, London.

Mr. Redwood: Responsibility for the disposal of county hall rests with the London residuary body. It has entered into an agreement with the Japanese company Shirayama

for the sale of the riverside building. An alternative proposal has been received from the London School of Economics. It is the intention that a statement should be made on this proposal in the near future, when it has been fully evaluated.

Mr. Banks: I am part grateful to the Minister for his reply. May I draw his attention to the all-party early-day motion 259, and ask him whether he is prepared to see an all-party delegation in his office before any further consideration is given to the issue? We should be grateful for that. Is it not a great shame that one of the premier, internationally known academic institutions in this country will possibly be denied access to the building, all parts of which it would use—not just the riverside—whereas a cheapjack, Japanese hotel group would use just the riverside front for a luxury hotel? It is a disgrace.

Mr. Redwood: The Government are well aware of the strong views on this subject on both sides of the argument and will take them fully into account when coming to their conclusion.

Mr. Jessel: Will my hon. Friend make sure that county hall is sold for as large a sum as possible, in order to benefit the people in all 32 London boroughs? Will he make certain that it is so well scrambled into private use that never again can it be commandeered as an autocratic socialist regional bureaucracy?

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend has made his point very forcefully. He has shown that there are divided views in the House on this important issue.

Rented Housing

23. **Mr. Betts:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to deal with the findings of the Audit Commission in its recent report on rented housing.

Sir George Young: The Audit Commission's report "Developing Local Authority Housing Strategies" commented helpfully on national housing policy issues and recommended ways in which local authorities could improve their performance. My announcement to the House on 21 May of proposals to place further emphasis on local authorities' efficiency and effectiveness in allocating housing investment resources, having regard to their developing enabling role as well as their role as direct housing providers, will help us to get best value for money from the full range of resources for special housing going into each area, as recommended by the commission.

Mr. Betts: Is it not true that the Audit Commission report also said that Government policies were totally inadequate to provide a proper supply of rented housing? Is it not also true that the National Federation of Housing Associations has produced a report which admits that some Government initiatives have produced some extra houses, but which also says that, as the Government insist on a very high level of private capital being included in the provisions, people on low incomes cannot afford those houses because rents have been forced up to such a high level by the Government's policy?

Sir George Young: The Audit Commission report focuses mainly on local authorities. Its title is "Developing Local Authority Housing Strategies". It lists a range of measures that local authorities should take to make progress, such as letting their properties faster, evicting squatters and other illegal tenants, giving land to housing associations and bringing in other agencies, particularly housing associations, to help to solve local problems. It made estimates of the national need, ranging from 58,000 to 90,000. I am prepared to meet the Audit Commission and talk through some of the implications of its report which are addressed to central Government.

Mr. Colvin: Does my hon. Friend agree that one way to help the public housing sector is to stimulate the private rented sector? Although I welcome everything that the Government have done to that end, I agree with the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) that very often rents in the private sector are far too high. One way to bring them down and to make them more affordable would be to introduce a housing tax allowance of about the same value as mortgage interest tax relief. When I suggested that to a Treasury Minister earlier this week, it was not ruled out of court. Will my hon. Friend join this lobby to try to persuade the Treasury to consider such a tax allowance which, I am sure, would do a great deal to make private rented accommodation more affordable?

Sir George Young: I am interested to hear of the exchange between my hon. Friend and my ministerial colleagues in the Treasury. As he rightly says, the question of tax allowances falls to the Treasury rather than to my Department, but we are anxious to get the private rented sector back on its feet. Last year, for the first time in many decades, there were more lettings in the private rented sector than leases falling in, so there are signs that the private rented sector has bottomed out. I am prepared to consider what further measures should be introduced to encourage more people to invest in good-quality accommodation for rent.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 3 JULY

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The Ballot Book has been open since 2.15 pm. There can be no more signatures. *[Interruption.]* From 2.15 to 3.30 is quite a long time.

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mrs. Anne Campbell
Mr. Jim Marshall
Dr. John Marek

BILLS PRESENTED

Commonwealth of Europe

Mr. Tony Benn presented a Bill to provide for the establishment of a Commonwealth of Europe, and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 33.]

Misuse of Drugs (Anabolic Steroids)

Mr. Menzies Campbell presented a Bill to extend the coverage of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 to include certain drugs which have been misused for the purpose of improving performance in sport: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 3 July and to be printed. [Bill 41.]

Orders of the Day

Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar).

3.32 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Today's debate may carry with it an air of familiarity for some hon. Members, given that the issue has been debated not once but twice in the Scottish Grand Committee where the principle of the Bill received broad support and, indeed, unopposed approval. Of course, I hope that that approval will be extended in the same spirit of harmony to today's proceedings.

The Bill is an important measure whose purpose is to secure the efficient conduct of sequestrations in Scotland in a manner that provides value for money to the taxpayer while protecting the legitimate interests of debtors and creditors. The need for reform of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 is widely recognised, and the Government's initiative in introducing today's Bill has been widely welcomed throughout Scotland, including by those professional bodies most directly affected by its provisions.

The new dimension injected into the proceedings today is reflected in the motion tabled by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and his colleagues, proposing that the Bill be committed to a Special Standing Committee. That is suddenly the fashionable cry about legislation. The possibility of referral to a Special Standing Committee is, of course, a reform of procedure introduced by a Conservative Government a decade or so ago but unused for about eight years. I have nothing against the proposition in principle. Where some new, broad issue of policy of widespread public interest is at stake on which the special expertise of outside bodies is needed, there may in future be a case for such references. However, that hardly applies in the present case.

It was the 1985 Act which constituted the major policy change, founded as it was on an important Law Commission report. Indeed, during an earlier discussion of the measure the hon. Member for Garscadden said:

> "It was a long overdue and well considered modernisation of law which went back to an Act of the Scottish Parliament of 1621."—*[Official Report, Scottish Grand Committee,* 4 June 1992; c. 20.]

Indeed it was—but it was a technically defective reform, and we are anxious to deal in the Bill with the imbalance that it created between the interests of debtors, creditors and taxpayers.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): We may all have thought at the beginning that, as the Secretary of State says, the Bill was not a matter of great public interest, but, as time has gone by, we have all received serious and formidable criticisms. Those who know about such things think that this is a matter of considerable interest. Is this not an ideal occasion, as my hon. Friend the Member for

Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) suggested, to restore the machinery which allows some questioning of experts on the matter before we start?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman's point of view is shared by his hon. Friends—but not by me. As I have said, the measure has had a wide welcome from the professional bodies most directly affected, including the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, the Law Society, and the Society of Practitioners of Insolvency.

The question has been raised whether we allowed adequate consultation.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The Secretary of State has already referred to the concept of harmony in Scotland —and there is certainly a Caledonian consensus that the Bill should be repatriated to enable the experts available in all aspects of the subject to be consulted and to make recommendations. Will the right hon. Gentleman comment, even at this early stage, on the proposal of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland that fees could be reduced to £800 per case? We need time to deliberate on such proposals, and on the intricacies of the Bill, to ensure that the draftsmanship is correct, and that we do not have to debate an inadequate Act.

Mr. Lang: It is certainly true that some of the practitioners have sharpened their pencils since the publication of the Bill—dramatically so. There are now suggestions that it may be possible to carry out the work covered in the past by the block fee of £2,147 for less than half that sum. I believe that it was Oscar Wilde who said that the prospect of being hanged concentrated the mind wonderfully.

The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) has repeatedly drawn attention to that aspect of the problem, and it must be addressed, in the interests of the taxpayer. There are also the interests of the creditors and the debtors, which are addressed in the Bill.

The hon. Lady has lost me with her reference to repatriation. We do not repatriate Bills in this Parliament; we pass legislation after proper scrutiny. The measure has been scrutinised twice in the Scottish Grand Committee and will go to a Scottish Standing Committee. That is the nearest to a patriotic front that I can offer the hon. Lady.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Will the Secretary of State say a word or two more about the proposal of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland which was referred to by the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing)? That proposal would dramatically reduce the cost of schedule 2 sequestrations, and, if it were acceptable to the Government, it would in effect rewrite the Bill by removing the essential principle of transferring the work from the private to the public sector. It would be helpful to the House, and a useful preparation for the Committee stage, if the Secretary of State would say whether he is contemplating such a shift, or holding to the general shape of the Bill, which at present excludes insolvency practitioners.

Mr. Lang: Obviously we are interested in the propositions put to us by the institute and we will study them carefully. What the hon. Gentleman has said about transferring the matter from the private to the public sector is an over-simplification, and I will deal with it later in my speech.

I want to deal with the consultation point raised earlier. The Opposition's attitude is underlined by their motion suggesting that we go to a Special Standing Committee. The urgent need to reform the Act is widely recognised; I do not accept that there has been inadequate consultation. The Government proposals have been made after careful monitoring of the operation of the 1985 Act by the Department of Trade and Industry, together with the Scottish courts administration and the accountant in bankruptcy, and the Treasury has taken an interest.

The announcement of the Bill was made in the Queen's Speech on 6 May and it was published on 8 May, at the first opportunity. By 12 May, copies of the Bill had been sent to various interested parties for comment. As Opposition Members have said, comment has flowed in thick and fast, on the whole supporting the principle of what we are doing, although raising aspects of detail that can be dealt with in Committee.

The principle of the Bill has been considered twice in the Grand Committee, on 4 and 7 June, 27 days after publication—rather more than the usual 12 days allowed —and has received unanimous approval. A further nine days elapsed before today's Second Reading, which we could call a special Second Reading; and the earliest date when the Bill can go into Standing Committee will be 30 June, nearly a fortnight from now. All that represents seven and a half weeks for representations and consultations—out of all proportion for a Bill of this size and very much more than some major Bills have been given. So there has been adequate consultation on what is essentially a technical adjustment to an earlier Bill whose mechanisms are not operating efficiently.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Since the remarkable information has emerged that the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland appears to be prepared to cut its fees by 60 per cent., does the Secretary of State agree that, had the inquiry been made before the Bill, it might have conditioned its nature in another direction? Does not that suggest that consultation was grossly inadequate—indeed, non-existent? Given that that is so and that so much other information has come out since the Bill was published, is not the case justified for looking at the whole issue again?

From what the right hon. Gentleman said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), it seems that the whole nature of the Bill might be changed yet again in the course of its passage —if he is seriously considering this offer.

Mr. Lang: We are not contemplating changing the nature of the Bill, which enacts a number of measures unrelated to fees. The fact remains that there have been negotiations in the past with the institute about the amount of the block fee, negotiations which have secured savings amounting roughly to 50 per cent. It will be clear from the figures that I will give the House shortly that the cost of administering sequestration in Scotland has soared dramatically, however, and the Government do not have the necessary powers to control these matters on behalf of the taxpayer. Even though there is still scope for futher negotiation with the practitioners and others over the conduct of sequestration, it is still necessary for the Government to have powers in this area.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Those of us who have just heard the right hon. Gentleman's

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illustration of what he thinks amounts to consultation will note that almost all of it has happened since publication of the Bill. The right hon. Gentleman will have to admit that, when the Scottish Grand Committee met, the main criticism of the Government concerned the lack of consultation before publication, not least with bodies such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, which was discussing with the accountant in bankruptcy how savings and improvements in the system could be made.

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that a Special Standing Committee is still the best course of action; but that as the Bill cannot go into Standing Committee until a week on Tuesday at the earliest, it is unlikely to emerge from Standing Committee before the recess, so it would be much more sensible to allow the summer for proper consideration and, if necessary, to withdraw the Bill and present it again in the autumn?

Mr. Lang: No: and, as I have said, there has been a great deal of consultation. The hon. Gentleman will know that policy responsibility was transferred to my Department only in this new Parliament but that there were earlier consultations. The negotiations over the block fee between the institute and others involved are themselves evidence of the degree of consultation.

There are certain flaws in the mechanisms for delivering the sequestration process which have unbalanced matters and they must be rectified. We therefore need the Bill for several areas of sequestration other than simply the level of fees.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Is the Secretary of State aware that, because of what he calls the consultative process, many organisations are genuinely worried and support the request to set up a Special Standing Committee? Surely that is not too much to ask in view of the situation in Scotland in respect of bankruptcy.

Mr. Lang: I have already answered that general point. I understand that the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) and his colleagues sincerely hold that view. However, the Government have considered the issue carefully and have decided that the Bill does not meet the criteria and the way in which they should be applied for a Special Standing Committee. As I said earlier, the Bill is not a major policy departure; it is not a major Bill in any sense. It corrects certain mechanical failures of an earlier more substantial Bill in respect of which there was no pressure from Opposition Parties for a Special Standing Committee.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Lang: No. I must make a little progress and I will then give way to the hon. Lady. I have already given way to her once or twice.

I am not arguing that the Bill cannot be improved; of course it can. Almost invariably Bills are improved in Committee. I emphasise that my hon. Friends and I approach the Committee in a constructive and flexible frame of mind. We are willing to consider change as the Bill makes progress.

I believe that the representations that we have received to date have identified the key areas in the Bill that hon. Members will wish to consider in detail in Committee. Those include concern about confining the role of interim trustee to the accountant in bankruptcy; access to sequestration by debtors; how a debtor is to finance his petition; and whether the procedures for debtor petitions can be simplifed further while maintaining a proper balance between the interests of debtors and creditors. All those issues can be properly dealt with in Standing Committee.

It may be helpful to the House if I sketch out the background to the Government's proposals. In so doing, I will try to avoid replicating the admirable work of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who presented the Government's case to the Scottish Grand Committee.

The Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985, which modernised the law of bankruptcy in Scotland, followed on from a detailed review undertaken by the Scottish Law Commission, as I have already said. The Act has been very successful in ensuring that in every sequestration a trustee is appointed with sufficient powers to see the sequestration through to its conclusion, and that where necessary the fees of that trustee are paid by the public purse. This latter innovation—placing on the Exchequer the responsibility for meeting any shortfall in the fees and outlays incurred by the trustee administering the sequestration—was introduced to ensure that there could be no return to the previous evil of limping sequestrations.

In such cases, the debtor might never be discharged of his obligations and creditors might never receive payment of sums owed to them, the reason being that there were insufficient assets in the debtor's estate to finance the cost of the operation. Similarly, for debtors with few assets, sequestration was not available as a means of reorganising their finances because it was impossible for them to persuade a trustee to take on the work.

In putting forward its reforms, the Scottish Law Commission did not anticipate any substantial call on the Exchequer to finance such sequestrations. In putting forward the 1985 Bill, the Government, I must acknowledge, did not see any reason to challenge this assumption by the commission and accepted the basis on which the proposals were advanced. However, since the 1985 Act was enacted, the position has turned out to be entirely different from that anticipated.

The cost to the taxpayer of financing the administration of individual sequestrations, through payment of the fees and outlays of the private sector insolvency practitioners who undertake the work, has risen from £13,000 in 1986 to £18·5 million in 1991. If the historical trends in the volume and costs of sequestrations were to continue, the costs would rise to some £50 million by 1993-94 and over £80 million by 1994-95. That is clearly an excessive amount of public expenditure and quite clearly does not represent value for money. It is therefore right that the Government should bring forward proposals to deal with the matter effectively, and, as I have said, that has been generally recognised.

The total cost to the Exchequer in any individual year is a consequence of the volume of sequestrations and the fee paid to the practitioners. Since 1986, the number of sequestrations has grown enormously, some fifteenfold, from 560 to 8,584 in 1991-92. On an annual basis, the average rate of growth has been some 74 per cent.

The nature of sequestrations has also changed dramatically in the period. Historically, sequestration has always been seen as a tool by which creditors could obtain an equitable distribution of a debtor's assets towards the repayment of the moneys owed to them. In 1986, 75 per cent. of all awards of sequestration were granted on the petition of a qualified creditor. By 1991-92, they constituted only 13 per cent. of the total.

In contrast, there has been an explosion in the number of petitions presented by a trustee under a trust deed. There were nearly 7,500 of those last year, accounting for 87 per cent. of all petitions granted. It is illuminating to examine the growth in the use of trustee petitions over the period since the 1985 Act was enacted. If the House cares to refer to the annual reports of the accountant in bankruptcy, which are to be found in the Library, it will see that the number of such petitions has grown from 31 in 1986-87 to 1,800 by 1989-90 and to 4,340 in 1990-91.

That growth is a reflection of the growing realisation amongst insolvency practitioners, money advice agencies and debtors that the trustee route provided easy access to sequestration—a route which was never envisaged when the 1985 Act was enacted.

For the benefit of those hon. Members who are not familiar with the practice, although by now most will be, the procedure is that a debtor is referred to an insolvency practitioner and is advised to sign a voluntary trust deed appointing that practitioner as trustee and transferring the debtor's estate to him to be realised for the benefit of the creditors. Having established that it is a small assets case, the administration of which will be funded by the Exchequer if the debtor is sequestrated, the trustee immediately petitions for sequestration and for appointment as interim trustee under the 1985 Act to administer the case. In due course, the same practitioner will be appointed permanent trustee and able to claim his fees.

At no time is any attempt made to operate the trust deed in the way it was originally intended—as a voluntary arrangement between the debtor and his creditors which would permit the debtor to reorganise his financial affairs without having to have recourse to the very serious step of being sequestrated. The use of the legal device of the trust deed has had the effect of detracting from the usefulness of voluntary arrangements as a means whereby a debtor can avoid sequestration.

That rapid growth in the volume of sequestrations and the change in the pattern of sequestrations is unique in Scotland. Although there has been growth in the level of bankruptcies in other parts of the United Kingdom in recent years, there has been nothing like the trend which is to be found in Scotland. Nor, when one examines the figures for corporate insolvencies in Scotland, does it show a similar growth pattern to that of sequestrations. The fact is that the level of insolvency in Scotland on a per capita basis has changed from being broadly equivalent to the level in England and Wales in 1987 to some three times that level by 1990. Those are very remarkable figures which cannot be explained in terms of relative economic prosperity or economic performance. Indeed, relative economic performance over the period has, by most criteria, moved in the opposite direction.

The Government recognise that, with the introduction of the 1985 Act, there would inevitably be some reaction in terms of the numbers of individuals being sequestrated. However, the change that we have seen cannot be explained in those terms alone.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): The Secretary of State seems to be saying that the real target of the Bill is the people who need to find a way out of debt. The right hon. Gentleman's theme in the past 10 minutes has been in that vein.

Mr. Lang: Absolutely not. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the Bill makes provision for a debtor to apply for sequestration. That was not the case before. The Bill tries to get the balance back on to an even keel between debtor, creditor and the taxpayers' interest.

Mrs. Ewing *rose*——

Mr. Wallace *rose*——

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill) *rose*——

Mr. Lang: I have given way to the hon. Members for Moray and for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) several times, so I shall give way to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe).

Mrs. Fyfe: If the Secretary of State is saying that the level of sequestrations in Scotland is three times that in England on a per capita basis, and that that has nothing to do with the state of the Scottish economy, what exactly is going on? If the law in England and Wales is different from that which was passed in Scotland in 1985, is not that all the more reason for taking care and for taking time for proper consultation the second time round?

Mr. Lang: As I have said, the relative economic performance of the different parts of the United Kingdom has been moving in the opposite direction. The hon. Member for Maryhill will be aware that unemployment in Scotland is now lower than it is elsewhere in the United Kingdom, for the first time since records began. The increase in the number of company liquidations in Scotland has been small by British standards. Between 1991 and 1992, the increase was 5·7 per cent. in Scotland, compared with 31·9 per cent. in Great Britain as a whole. That demonstrates the contrast between the trend in personal sequestrations and the performance of the economy.

Mr. Dalyell: In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty), the Secretary of State gave a decisive "Absolutely not", but on the issue of small asset sequestrations, which my hon. Friend raised by implication, why does the right hon. Gentleman believe that many of us have been contacted by welfare rights organisations saying that small asset sequestrations are likely to be more frequent under the coming legislation and will hurt the most vulnerable, as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) said? Why should they all be so worried?

Mr. Lang: I do not believe that that will be the case. The hon. Gentleman will be aware—indeed, I touched on it earlier—that before the 1985 Act there were particular difficulties with small asset sequestrations. The 1985 Act has considerably eased the position but has created a new procedure whereby debtors with small asset cases can go straight to an insolvency practitioner who can be appointed as an interim trustee and subsequently as a permanent trustee. The practitioner can pick up a fee of £2,147 for wrapping up the case. That has led to a dramatic surge of applications, which must reflect a

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change in the attitude to debt and a recognition of the opportunity that the procedure provides for a relatively easy way out of problems.

Mr. Wallace: In all fairness, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), said in the Scottish Grand Committee that the effect of the Bill should not be to deny anyone access to sequestration other than those denied it at present. So clearly no saving should be made by reducing the number of people applying for sequestration. If it is not economic circumstances, what is the reason for the increase? Of that number, what proportion were people in self-employment?

Mr. Lang: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the latter figure, but it may be possible to identify it; if so, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will give it to the hon. Gentleman either later today or in Committee. On the initial point, it is not the Government's intention to make access to sequestration more difficult. As I said, the Bill contains a provision which allows debtors direct access. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary said that in the Grand Committee, too. The Bill also provides for the streamlining of procedures, simplification of the handling of cases, and a reduction in the fee level. It is universally recognised that that level is far too high.

Mrs. Ewing *rose*——

Mr. Lang: I give way to the hon. Lady, but it will have to be for the last time.

Mrs. Ewing: Does the Secretary of State recognise that the proposals in the Bill make the process of seeking sequestration more complex? Indeed, the process may create more bureaucracy and further costs. That was identified by an individual who works in welfare rights serving the Dumfries and Galloway region. Does the Secretary of State appreciate that the proposals in the Bill mean that someone would have to approach first a welfare officer or someone in a citizens advice bureau and then a solicitor to seek legal aid? The person would then have to proceed to creditors for a protected trust deed and then seek a sheriff's ruling.

All that makes the procedure much more complex. We argue that there must be consultation because we want to ensure access and simplicity, reduce costs, and make the Bill effective. Those aspects cannot be picked up in an ordinary Standing Committee but could be included in a redrafted Bill if we had a Special Standing Committee.

Mr. Lang: I do not accept the hon. Lady's analysis. The Government would not have introduced the Bill in its present form if we had thought what she suggested. The hon. Lady makes the mechanisms that have to be pursued by a debtor sound more difficult than they are. It is clearly desirable that a debtor should have access to independent advice. Indeed, we have gone out of our way to increase the funding of money advice centres and other such organisations to enable and encourage them to give such advice.

No one should be urged too strongly to rush to sequestration. The House will recognise that where it is possible to avoid sequestration—for example, by a protected trust deed or some other way—it might be a desirable outcome. To make it too easy and too direct would be to undermine the interests of the taxpayer, the creditor and the debtor. We are seeking to establish a proper balance and to simplify procedures within it, as far as that can be done.

The hon. Member for Moray makes a point which may well have validity. There will be an opportunity to argue that in Standing Committee when we reach the clauses concerned with procedures.

Mr. Dewar: I am sorry to butt in and to labour the point, but it is in the interests of the House that we understand the Government's position. Is it the Secretary of State's contention that, after the machinery is in operation, he expects the case load—the number of people going through sequestration procedures—to remain as it is or to drop? If he expects it to drop, are we to deduce that people who ought to be able to follow that course will be prevented from doing so? Or is he positing, as the Under-Secretary suggested—to be fair, he was quoting creditors—that insolvency practitioners are putting people through sequestration procedures because it is in their financial interests to do so but, by implication, there is no public or individual interest in following that course?

Mr. Lang: I think that the hon. Gentleman has reached that conclusion. He referred in the Scottish Grand Committee to a "gravy train" and other hon. Members have suggested the same. I hesitate to give a forecast on the number of debtors who will seek sequestration. Given the Government's collective record on such forecasts since 1985, it might be unwise to do so. I advance the theory that the Bill is broadly neutral in that sense and seeks to achieve a better balance between debtor and creditor and, by streamlining procedures and reducing fee levels, to reduce Government costs substantially.

I earnestly hope that the Bill will avoid the dramatic escalation of such applications in recent years, with their frightening implications for public expenditure.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lang: No; I must make some progress. I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman later.

What is very clear is that the trend is causing considerable alarm amongst creditors, who view with great concern the growing pattern of sequestrations in Scotland. They have expressed the fear that the present law could work against the public interest by providing an incentive for the marketing of sequestration as a solution to debt problems, since on the face of it the debtor has little to lose and the practitioner has a considerable amount to gain if a debtor is sequestrated.

I fully accept that the majority of debtors enter into sequestration only after receiving careful advice from money advice centres and others and from the insolvency practitioner who handles their case. Nevertheless, the loss of faith amongst creditors in the sequestration process must be a matter of concern to the House.

Sequestration and the laws of bankruptcy have always been rightly seen as underpinning the operation of the credit market. Parliament has sought to maintain a balance between the interests of debtors and creditors. There is a real danger that we have inadvertently created a situation which has lost that sense of balance and which works against the interests of creditors as well as taxpayers.

There is no doubt that the present law can give rise to a potential conflict of interest on the part of the insolvency practitioner. It certainly causes confusion as to whether the practitioner is acting in the interests of the debtor or in the interests of the creditor. Prior to the signing of the trust deed, the practitioner offering advice is acting for the debtor, but by law he must act in the interest of creditors once a trust deed is signed or sequestration is awarded. The present arrangements blur that important distinction.

Under the present regime, an insolvency practitioner is entitled to be reimbursed with his fees and outlays from the Exchequer, where there are insufficient assets in the debtor's estate to finance the sequestration. In some 80 per cent. of all sequestrations in 1991-92—in some 6,800 cases—there were no assets in the debtor's estate which could be realised for the benefit of the creditors. Yet, despite that, the insolvency practitioner is entitled to receive a block fee of £2,147 from the Exchequer for administering the sequestration. The House has every right to question whether such a payment represents value for money to the taxpayer. I do not believe that it does.

Moreover, under those arrangements the Government's powers to secure an improvement in the cost to the taxpayer are severely limited. While the 1985 Act gives responsibility to the accountant in bankruptcy to determine the level of remuneration to be paid to a trustee in a sequestration, he is required in exercising his discretion to take account only of the work which has been reasonably undertaken by the trustee—having regard to the value of the debtor's estate—and to the extent of the trustee's responsibilities in administering the debtor's estate. In so far as a trustee can demonstrate that he has conformed to the requirements of the 1985 Act in administering the sequestration, the accountant in bankruptcy has little alternative but to pay the fee charged. The Act certainly does not provide for the accountant in bankruptcy to take account of the interests of the taxpayer, who, after all, is being required to meet the bill, in setting the level of remuneration.

I acknowledge that the problem was recognised by both the accountant in bankruptcy and by the insolvency profession itself. As a result, and in an effort to reduce the demand on the public purse, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland and the accountant in bankruptcy entered into a voluntary agreement, as I said earlier, to allow the introduction of a block fee agreement, which covers the vast majority of sequestrations. Most cases are now dealt with under this new regime.

The accountant estimates that by this means the cost to the Exchequer has been reduced by some 50 per cent. of what it would otherwise have been if insolvency practitioners had continued to charge on the basis envisaged in the 1985 Act. However welcome this improvement, it is not a basis on which to continue the regime into the future. The Government believe that the reforms being introduced by the Bill are essential if we are adequately to protect the taxpayers' interests and secure value for money.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I hope that my right hon. Friend will say something about the interests of the creditor. The creditor's interest is to be paid in full. Insolvency, sequestration and bankruptcy frustrate his proper right.

Mr. Lang: As I said earlier, once the trust deed has been signed, the law requires that the interests of the creditors are paramount. My hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right. It is a matter of balance. I have referred to creditors on a number of occasions, but I am glad to underline that we must achieve a balance. After all, the creditor is probably the most innocent party of all those involved in such sad affairs.

I stress that it is not the Government's intention to secure value for money by denying debtor's access to sequestration—quite the reverse. As I have said, for the first time, debtors will be able to petition for their own sequestration if the Bill is enacted. Instead, we will secure better value for money through simplifying the procedures which apply to sequestrations where there are few assets, and by tighter control over the fees paid to the insolvency practitioners.

The Bill itself is principally an enabling measure and ensures that the administrative responsibility for sequestrations is brought alongside the financial responsibility, which, as I have explained, is already borne by the public sector.

Mr. Dalyell: The right hon. Gentleman says that he wants tighter control over the fees paid to sequestrators. How will he bring that about? We know from our constituency work that it will be very difficult.

Mr. Lang: We are taking powers in clause 8, as the hon. Gentleman will discover if he serves on the Committee. Such powers do not exist now and, without them, the public interest is not protected adequately, as the past seven years' experience has shown.

The Bill places the responsibility for the conduct of sequestrations on the accountant in bankruptcy, who is a public official appointed by the Secretary of State. The accountant will have the responsibility for ensuring that an efficient, cost-effective sequestration service is operated in Scotland in a manner that not only meets the needs of debtors and creditors, but protects the interests of the taxpayer. To that extent, the accountant's role would be analogous to that of the insolvency service in England and Wales and in Northern Ireland.

It would take me a long time to go through all the clauses, but the general outline of most of them is familiar to the House. However, I shall touch on some of the concerns raised in earlier debates. I can best do that by referring to some of the more important clauses.

Clause 1 enables the accountant in bankruptcy either to employ his own staff to undertake his duties or to employ agents to carry out the work on his behalf. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has already explained in previous discussions, such agents could be insolvency practitioners who had contracted with the accountant in bankruptcy to provide a sequestration service in particular parts of the country. By a combination of the use of his own staff and of insolvency practitioners, the Government are in no doubt that the accountant in bankruptcy will be able to provide an efficient service across the country—I know that the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland was concerned about that. Therefore, the risk of the process being centralised in Edinburgh which the hon. Gentleman and a number of other hon. Members feared can be avoided.

It will come as no surprise to the House that the Government are fully committed to market-testing the

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delivery of the sequestration service in accordance with the principles that we have established. We shall look closely at the detailed implementation of the Bill to ensure that wherever possible, the private sector has the opportunity to undertake the work where that can be done in a cost-effective manner. I say that in response to the undertone of anxiety which I detected from earlier debates in the Scottish Grand Committee that too much might be concentrated in the hands of the state. At present, the advice agency, which directs the debtor to an insolvency practitioner, determines who shall act in a sequestration in most cases. Neither the creditor nor the taxpayer, who is paying for the process, has a say in the matter. The chosen practitioner is in a monopoly position. Provided that he maintains a good relationship with the advice agency in handling its clients, he can be confident of a steady stream of work. In future, the accountant in bankruptcy will be in a position to introduce a much stronger dose of competition into the process. By tendering out the provision of the service to insolvency practitioners, he can ensure that value for money and quality of service are secured. The best and most efficient and effective practitioners are likely to gain from that process.

Mr. Wallace: One of the important issues that arose in the Scottish Grand Committee was the fact that, at present, a debtor who went to an insolvency practitioner could be advised that there was no need for sequestration. Do the Government intend to allow the accountant in bankruptcy or those acting on his behalf to tender similar advice, or does the Bill mean that, by the time someone goes to the accountant in bankruptcy, the threshold has been crossed?

Mr. Lang: The accountant in bankruptcy does not have the role of tendering advice; indeed, he has no right to do so. That is why the money advice centres, citizens advice bureaux and access to a solicitor with legal aid are important parts of the overall package.

Clause 2 provides for the appointment of the accountant in bankruptcy as interim trustee in all sequestrations. I am conscious that the concentration of the responsibility for acting as interim trustee in the hands of the accountant in bankruptcy has caused concern in a number of quarters. It has been suggested that the accountant would not be able to deal with trading businesses—the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) raised that issue in the Scottish Grand Committee—or other cases where creditors require a trustee to be put in place at the earliest possible opportunity. I understand that fear.

The Bill gives the accountant in bankruptcy precisely the same power as is currently available to an insolvency practitioner to protect a debtor's estate. He may also be appointed quickly to ensure that those assets are not dissipated. In practice, however, the particular requirements of a trading business would probably justify the accountant in bankruptcy employing an insolvency practitioner as his agent to undertake the administration of the sequestration. The Bill enables the accountant to do that.

Nevertheless, as my hon. Friend has said, the Government are sympathetic to the argument that the private sector should be allowed to undertake the work directly as interim trustee where there is no likelihood of any call being made on public funds to finance the sequestration. We are actively considering specific amendments to the Bill which would enable such an arrangement to operate. I realise that that aspect of the matter concerned several hon. Members earlier in our discussions.

On the basis of a proposal, originally put forward by the Scottish Insolvency Practitioners Joint Liaison Committee, whom the Government have consulted extensively on the Bill, those arrangements would allow a creditor or debtor to nominate an insolvency practitioner in cases where there are sufficient assets to finance the cost of the sequestration. Provided that we can be satisfied that such an arrangement is workable and will not give rise either to limping sequestrations or a future demand on public funds, we would be prepared to consider amendments to the Bill in Committee to deal with that matter.

The enactment of the Bill will improve the handling of sequestrations for the benefit of debtors, creditors and taxpayers. It builds on the experience of operating the 1985 Act and rectifies the flaws that can be clearly perceived in its administrative arrangements. I recognise the legitimate concerns that have been expressed about the effect of several provisions. I hope that I have given sufficient assurance that the Government will approach the Bill's Committee stage constructively. We are prepared to listen carefully to reasoned arguments. I have no doubt that the Bill will emerge strengthened from that process, and I commend it to the House.

4.13 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill because of the inadequate opportunity for consultation between the Government and interested bodies in Scotland on the contents of the measure."

I must confess that Scottish politics are full of unexpected pleasures. The House will not be surprised to hear that no one's heart missed a beat at the news in the Queen's Speech that the law on bankruptcy in Scotland was to be adjusted. However, the Bill has turned out to be interesting. It is full of unlikely facts, bizarre circumstances and at least a hint of a reversal in normal political roles.

I enjoyed watching the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who seemed to have been brought from the substitutes' bench as a late replacement for the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) to introduce the Bill. He clearly enjoyed the prospect less and less the more he read about it. It is not a fit fate for such an enthusiastic member of the No Turning Back group to find himself presiding over such a snappy little nationalisation measure. If that is part of the striving for a better character in Scotland that we are promised by the Government, I welcome it.

Today's event is unusual: the debate is about the merits of the matter. The House is being invited to give a Second Reading to the Bill, but there is a sub-theme—the question why the Bill is being debated here at all. As the Secretary of State factually reported, the Bill was discussed for not one but two days in the Scottish Grand Committee. I made no objection to its referral to that Committee, as that seemed an appropriate way to deal with the Bill where there

was no head-on political collision over a matter of principle. There was no root and branch opposition; we recognised that there was a problem, to which a solution had to be found. I do not intend to rehearse in great detail the arguments deployed in the Scottish Grand Committee, but the nature of the problem must be described and considered if the present argument about the procedure —the sub-theme to which I referred—is to be understood.

The Secretary of State made it clear that the genesis of the debate goes back a long way, to the Scottish Law Commission's report of 1982 and its wide-ranging review of the law on bankruptcy. I do not object to being quoted to the effect that that review was long overdue as I do not think that that greatly affects the subsequent argument —it was long overdue. As the Secretary of State said, the Scots statute of 1621 was then the basis of the law. Whatever respect I have for the work of the 17th-century Scottish Parliament, I am not such a purist as my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) and believe that mistakes may have been made in 1621, especially when we look at the circumstances that prevail today—*[Interruption.]* I am glad to say that I did not hear the sedentary interruption by my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East.

There was a case for a review, which was designed partly to consider sequestration procedure. As the House knows, sequestration is a way of regulating the affairs of a debtor, protecting both the debtor and the creditor, and attempting to create order in someone's affairs when they are in chaos. One of the odd by-products of the law as instituted in 1985 was that, while it cured one defect, it created a great worry for the Government. The defect that we were trying to cure was the anomaly of a rich debtor —if that is not a contradiction in terms—being able to take advantage of professional help and sequestration law in a way not fully available to a debtor at the bottom of the pecking order. There was a simple and, possibly, human reason for that.

If the sequestration case involved assets—regardless of whether the debts outweighed the assets—they could be used to pay for professional fees, which have a first charge on assets. Therefore, it was possible for such a debtor to engage professional help because the money needed for the fees was protected. Conversely, if the case involved virtually no assets, the insolvency practitioner was unlikely to give of his or her time and trouble with no prospect of reward. The Law Commission properly argued that that state was not right and suggested the principle correctly accepted in the 1985 legislation—that the state should take responsibility for the costs of sequestration in a small assets case that was likely to be barred for the practical reasons that I have described.

In the Scottish Grand Committee, I mentioned the quaint, old-world atmosphere that prevailed in the Law Commission's report of 1982, which assumed that drafting legislation to give the state responsibility for paying fees would probably produce between 120 and 150 new sequestration cases a year and result in a total cost of fees to the public purse of between £6,000 and £7,500.

After 1985 the floodgates opened. There is controversy, and I suspect more controversy to come, about exactly why that happened. In 1985 there were, not between 120 and 150 cases, but 295 sequestrations. By 1991 the number had risen to nearly 8,000. Instead of a top limit of £7,500, the state was paying insolvency practitioners £18·5 million.

I accept that that is a massive sum. I received one letter from an ingenious and brave insolvency practitioner who suggested that the sum was small when measured against the costs of the poll tax. It did not seem to be an argument likely to soften the heart of the Secretary of State, but I leave it on the Dispatch Box in front of him. No doubt he can consider it. To be serious, it is a large sum. The figures mentioned in the press over the weekend suggested that the projected cost of the entire civil legal aid scheme for the state in 1991-92, at £166 million, was considerably less than the fees paid to insolvency practitioners.

It is well known to anyone who has followed the debate, even superficially, that we have in the memorandum to the Bill the exciting prospect that the £18·5 million will soon be dwarfed and that in 1993-94 the Government expect to pay £50 million and in 1994-95 £80 million to insolvency practitioners. In fairness, when that was put to the Under-Secretary, he bravely suggested that the figures were merely an extrapolation of a trend. I think that he was inviting us to take the view that the material in the financial memorandum should be disregarded and was worthless. If that was not his intention and we are to take these figures seriously, they are indeed spectacular.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, perhaps rather meanly, pointed out that, on the present fee pattern, by the middle of this decade there would be 40,000 sequestrations a year in Scotland. That does not suggest that the Scottish Office is wholly convinced of the imminence of economic recovery, but there we are.

I accept that the situation cannot be shrugged off. Obviously, the Scottish Office is unhappy. If it is not unhappy, we can bet our bottom dollar that the Treasury is. If I may mix metaphors, I suspect that Ministers smelt, if not a rat, at least a gravy train, as the Minister remarked, and one that should be derailed.

I do not know entirely what Ministers' real thoughts on the matter are. During these exchanges we have tried to get to the bottom of them. The Under-Secretary of State was careful to say that he was not accusing insolvency practitioners of any sort of improper practice; he was only reflecting the views of creditors that they were pushing people into sequestration to make financial gain. It was a case of "some people say". In my experience, when that argument is used, there is at least some sort of endorsement by implication from he who spreadeth the rumour. In any event, we shall have to probe that later.

It is clear that insolvency practitioners—there are about 220 of them in Scotland and in recent years they have, indeed, been a happy band of brothers—have done extremely well. They are mostly accountants. The figures have been extracted by the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) through parliamentary questions that are well known to those of us who attended the Scottish Grand Committee debate. They reveal that those in the premier league have done extremely well. In 1991 one firm, not a great international firm but a home-grown example of entrepreneurial skill, took £3·427 million in fees from the state.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Name it.

Mr. Dewar: Pannell Kerr and Foster is the name, as I am invited to give it. It was followed by Ernst and Young with £2·2 million and Cork Gully with £1·9 million. The names are public knowledge as a result of answers from Ministers. That is the background to the problem.

[Mr. Dewar]

It is because the Opposition recognised that there was a problem that we were happy to look at the solution to see whether some way forward could be found on the basis that, with one or two exceptions such as the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990, debates on law reform Bills in this Parliament tend to be productive, and there was no reason to think that this Bill would be an exception.

Unfortunately, the going has become rather hard and I must confess that I am unhappy about the Government's approach. There is no doubt at all that the chosen solution, although the Minister does not like it, was, as I said earlier, a matter of nationalisation; what I described in the Scottish Grand Committee as a good old-fashioned dose of the same. The work is being moved from the private to the public sector. In all cases, the interim trustee in sequestration, unless it is decided to employ a private sector professional as his agent, will be the accountant in bankruptcy.

Mr. Wallace: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman was as bemused as I was to hear the Secretary of State's justification that there would be competition in the tendering of the services to be provided by the accountant. If the legal aid bill seems to be getting out of hand, does the hon. Gentleman see some future in, as it were, nationalising the legal profession, and having an official legal aid solicitor who would ask for tenders from different private solicitors throughout the country for the handling of legal aid? Is not the important point that an element of delectus personae has been lost?

Mr. Dewar: Yes, that is undoubtedly so. That element of delectus personae has, by definition, been lost, causing particular irritation in non-schedule 2 cases among the accountancy profession. Delectus personae might also be an issue in schedule 2 cases, but I have not pushed that because, given the general picture, there is a case for allowing the accountant in bankruptcy to undertake the work. But before that happens, we need substantial assurances about the way in which the new system will be organised and operated and whether it will allow people, not necessarily to have the professional adviser of their choice, but any professional adviser at all. That is the key to the argument and to the unhappiness of a large number of the welfare organisations which have made representations to us.

The Under-Secretary made it clear when he introduced the Bill that his favoured solution was that the accountant should be banished from the scene and allowed to return only under sufferance as the agent of the accountant in bankruptcy, and that civil servants should rule in his stead. His analysis was clearly that this was an area where the market had not worked as it should and where the profit motive had worked too well. As a result, he was prepared to advocate to the House—all credit to him because it cannot have been easy—that the work be taken away from the private sector and given to the accountant in bankruptcy, and that, as a concomitant of that, we should contemplate the appointment of 85 new civil servants in 1993-94 and 120 in 1994-95 to undertake the additional work load. That is what we are being asked to contemplate and that is what the hon. Gentleman is personally recommending.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): In a number of respects, that is not precisely what I said, but I will come back to that later if I am successful in catching your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So that the House is clear, will the hon. Gentleman confirm that I did say, as my right hon. Friend confirmed in his opening remarks, that we were sympathetic to the amendments that had been put forward on non-schedule 2 cases?

Mr. Dewar: Absolutely. It came as no surprise to the Opposition that the Government were prepared to make concessions on that. I understand the arguments for that and I am happy to leave the matter to the Committee stage when we can examine it in some detail. I want to return to other aspects of the accountants' case, but I must push on. Having described the problem and the Minister's favoured solution, I come to why we believe that it is right that the Bill's next stage should be in a Special Standing Committee.

The House will know that a Special Standing Committee has up to four sessions which allow Committee members to take direct evidence from interested bodies and parties as though they were a Select Committee. I believe that I was the first to suggest such an arrangement: my suggestion can be found in column 20 of the *Hansard* report of the Scottish Grand Committee debate that took place on 4 June.

The main reason for my suggestion, and, I think, for the widespread support that it has gained from my colleagues and from other parties, is the fact that the Bill involves many complex and technical matters. There have been major protests about what are seen as unintended consequences of the legislation. It has been suggested that Ministers have a hidden agenda, and there is a suspicion that many people who require help, and who may benefit from the sequestration procedure, will be effectively excluded by some of the barriers built into the Bill.

Such views have been expressed not only by accountants and lawyers—who might be thought to have a vested interest—but by welfare organisations of almost every kind. It is fair to say that there is scepticism everywhere; even, I suspect, among the Ministers who are handling the Bill.

My second reason for believing that the Bill should be dealt with by a special Standing Committee is the number of complaints that have been made about the lack of consultation. I do not intend to illustrate that by means of lengthy and copious quotations; however, I do not think that the Minister would deny that a single message has emerged from almost all the representations that have been sent to hon. Members.

Let me mention my own constituency first. Obviously, I am interested in what has been said of the Drumchapel law centre, and in the views of the Tackling Debt group, which is based in the Castlemilk law centre and represents a wide consortium of interests. Similar opinions have been expressed by the Scottish Consumer Council, a statutory body funded by the Government; by Citizens Advice Scotland, which has a uniquely wide experience of practical counselling on debt; by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, and by the Law Society of Scotland, which was caught completely on the hop by the Bill's appearance.

I could, if I wished, underline the message that has emerged from those organisations with many quotations.

They were astonished when the Bill, fully formed and finalised in every detail, appeared in print at the Vote Office: they had had no knowledge of it, and had not been consulted about its contents. That is unsatisfactory, to say the least. Surely the discontent that has resulted is a strong reason for establishing a Special Standing Committee, allowing interested groups to argue their case and enabling the Committee to examine that case.

There are, in my view, two broad areas of concern. I shall describe them in shorthand, as it were. First, there is the welfare point about exclusion, to which I have already referred. It is said, for example, that the accountant in bankruptcy can be brought in only by means of a petition to the court, and that the costs of that petition are immediately covered in the block fee paid to the insolvency practitioner. It is argued that, if the insolvency practitioner is removed from the scene, in many cases the debtor may have to bear the costs, or they may have to come from the assets of the sequestration; debtors may not be able to afford that.

Such consequences may substantially reduce the number of people who can use the proposed procedures. That is an important reservation: if justified, it suggests that those who most need counselling and the help afforded by sequestration to order their affairs will be denied such assistance. Admittedly, in his closing speech on the second day of the Scottish Grand Committee, the Minister—the hon. Member for Eastwood—made it clear that that was not the Government's intention. He said that any savings would come from the streamlining of procedures and the cutting of moneys to be paid in fees to insolvency practitioners.

Nevertheless, despite that statement—which came a little late in our proceedings—there are many lingering fears, which are widely shared. I remind the Minister of a point to which I referred before—the written answer by the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West, in which he said:

> "It is clear that the major factor influencing the number of sequestrations in Scotland is the easier access by individuals to the sequestration process . . . The Government are actively considering the need for changes to the present legislation." —[*Official Report*, 16 March 1992; Vol. 205, *c. 821*.]

Indeed they were.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West, who is here today, will understand that the implication of the statement that the number of sequestrations is the major factor at the root of the problem is that the number of sequestrations must be cut. I shall read with care what has been said today by the Secretary of State for Scotland. However, everything that he said reinforces rather than removes that particular doubt, which is almost universally shared. Those organisations that have made it clear that they have such fears should be given the chance to make a direct contribution to the proceedings of a Special Standing Committee.

I wish also to refer to a matter that is of particular interest to accountants. They have made many points—for example, about delectus personae, a point to which the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) referred. Advice should be available over a wide area. I know that the Minister is seized of that point. One also has to consider whether the accountant in bankruptcy is the most appropriate way to preserve creditors' assets in non-scheduled cases. These matters could be dealt with in a Special Standing Committee.

Full consideration should be given to the fundamental nature of the recommendations made by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland in the letter that some of us received today. The institute challenges the whole basis of the Bill. The Bill would remove the power, except under licence, for accountants to be interim trustees in sequestration. It gives that power to the accountant in bankruptcy.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland says that that is unnecessary and that it can still be dealt with by the private sector at a very reduced cost. It suggests that there should be a simplified procedure under which fees could be cut to about £800 in cases where assets amount to less than £2,000 and debts to less than £20,000 and that in addition the outlays would amount to £200. The institute reckons that the sum of £18·5 million in 1991 could be cut to £10·5 million. That would mean rewriting the Bill. The Government have to tell us whether they are prepared to consider such a solution.

We pressed the Secretary of State on the issue. He did not appear to rule it out when he said that it would have to be closely considered. If a fundamental point of that kind is to be made, I cannot think of a better place for it to be argued than a Special Standing Committee. The profession should be given the opportunity to put its case and to answer questions. In that event, the arguments would not be transferred and inevitably distorted to some extent by means of a third party—a Minister. In view of the important amendments that we are asked to contemplate, there should be direct access to the parliamentary process. I hope that, at the end of the debate, the Minister will say that the Government are prepared to contemplate this proposition. If so, it would amount almost to a wrecking amendment, so fundamentally would it change the Bill.

No Special Standing Committee has ever considered Scottish legislation, although this specific machinery has been used seven or eight times for the consideration of English legislation. I genuinely believe that this would be an appropriate Bill for that machinery. It raises non-contentious issues in a narrow political sense, but contentious legal issues with economic and social consequences for individuals who are already disadvantaged, and I believe that many hon. Members will want to probe those issues. I cannot remember a technical Bill causing so much interest from Scottish bodies with expertise to offer.

It is only common sense to use the new procedure, and I deeply regret the fact that the Secretary of State has adopted such an obdurate attitude. I hope that in the couple of hours available to him he will consider some of the speeches that he has made in the past few weeks about the government of Scotland and how Westminster handles Scottish affairs. We have been told that there will be a new sensitivity and a tireless search for improvements within the structures of Westminster. The Secretary of State said that there is certainly room for reform. We are now presenting him with a modest opportunity to prove that and to show a touch of imagination, but we find a brick wall—a dogged refusal to act.

It is easy for the Secretary of State to smile, but he does not know what is in his own best interests. The way in which he has handled the matter undermines his credibility and respect for his protestations that he is, to some extent, a reformed character. It is a pity, and if our proposal is not adopted, we may end up with a Bill that is not as good as

[Mr. Dewar]

it should be, certainly not as well considered as it should be, and we shall have legislation which will leave many well informed and relevant bodies in Scotland feeling that they have been short-changed and not involved as they should have been.

I shall not advise my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against Second Reading, because there is still a great deal of work to be done and I do not object to our having the opportunity to discuss the problems. However, I shall certainly advise them to vote for the motion to consider the Bill in a Special Standing Committee. I also urge the Government, even now, to think again about their attitude.

4.41 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): There is no doubt in the minds of those in Scotland who are interested in the issue that the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 had to be amended. That is the general view expressed in the correspondence that all hon. Members have received.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) made an interesting and informative speech, but he overstated the case. He and I know that, whenever we discuss legislation in Committee, we are showered with correspondence from interested parties. To suggest that there is something new in what is happening with the Bill implies that he has forgotten all the hours that we have spent in Committee. I have with me all the correspondence that I have received since we first had sight of the Bill. I hold it up for the House because it is important. It is about one third of what I always receive on other Scottish Bills, and equally important legal Bills.

Let me make it clear that I, too, want the Bill to be amended, but that will not surprise anyone, because there is frequently cross-party agreement among Back Benchers in Committee when we discuss Scottish legislation, and we often get the Government to change Bills. What is interesting on this occasion is that the Government said at the outset that they wanted to adopt a flexible and responsive position. I cannot say in all honesty that that has always been the case in Committee.

Mr. Wilson: Does the hon.Gentleman agree that, if the Government were to accept the proposition that insolvency practitioners should cut fees by 60 per cent. but otherwise continue much as before, it would be a fundamental change to the Bill? If so, would it not have been a good idea to find out about that before the Bill was introduced rather than at this stage?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman will also agree that one finds changes of such magnitude among those with vested interests—that has certainly been true for all the other Bills that I have considered in Committee—once the Bill has been printed. Once they begin to realise what may be changed in the playing fields to which they have grown accustomed—whoever they are—they start to examine the small print after the Bill has been printed and start to make proposals. That is not novel or different.

It is interesting that, in trying to find a balance between the interests of the debtors, creditors and taxpayers, so much emphasis has properly been placed on those who find themselves in debt and cannot see a way out. One issue has worried me for a long time, and hon. Members will probably concur. In our constituencies, we meet individuals who have allowed themselves to be locked into a situation, and only after they are locked in do they begin to realise what it means. To such individuals, sequestration may appear to be an easy way to resolve their difficulties at any given time and the only way to put one's affairs in some order. However, one should not enter into it lightly without having thought it through properly.

Let us consider the case of a young man who has his whole life ahead of him. Perhaps he has written off a car or something similar and finds that he is insolvent. Under the Act, he may be advised that the easiest course open to him is sequestration. He may have an income which, although not vast, may increase. He may hope to get married, as most people do, and obtain credit to buy a house or get a mortgage and to obtain credit to furnish it. That is the natural thing to do, but if he has entered into the system under the 1985 Act, taken the advice given to him and become sequestrated, he will find to his horror that, although he has a regular income, he will not be able to obtain credit because he is barred. That could have a damaging impact at an important time in his life.

The income and potential income of an applicant should always be considered, not only because it is in the interests of the creditors—and it is—but because it is probably in the best interests of the young person who has opportunities ahead of him. That is why the Bill needs to be amended.

We must get the balance right and accept the need for reform. The hon. Member for Garscadden referred to the view set out by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland in its letter which said:

"What is at issue is the cost of cases funded by the public."

The fact that that is the institute's position does not surprise me, given the amount of money that goes to its members. So we must accept that the institute, too, has suggested revised proposals. What it offers is interesting, but before we comment on its proposals, we shall want to examine them in detail. We can best do that by examining them in Committee as soon as possible.

I hope that in Committee we shall also take the opportunity to look after the interests not only of taxpayers—important though those are—but of creditors. Under the 1985 Act, sequestration is an automatic process. If formal preconditions are met, the court must make an order, and the merits of each individual case are irrelevant. Neither the sheriff nor the creditors can stop the process on the ground that sequestration is not appropriate. I have cited one instance in which I believe sequestration may not be appropriate, and there will be others.

That defect is compounded by the lack of advance warning given to creditors. Most will learn of the sequestration only after it has been awarded, and that is unsatisfactory. I hope that we shall be able to amend the Bill to allow creditors to argue that an award should not be made, and to require the court to refuse an award if it is believed that the debtor can repay his or her debts over a reasonable period. That is in the best interests of the debtor as well as of the creditor, because it does not do to find oneself debarred.

I hope that in Committee we can introduce and discuss amendments about a simple and cost-effective way of requiring a court to establish a debtor's free income and, if appropriate, to require him to pay that over for distribution to the creditors. I should have thought that it was our duty to all three parties—especially to the

taxpayer—to examine that idea carefully, because the allure of sequestration for many is its practical effect on their income at the time of the award.

In theory, section 32 permits the sheriff, on the application of the permanent trustee, to make an order for contribution from income. In practice, the section is ignored; thus the debtor's income remains untouched. There are probably two reasons why the section is not used.

First, creditors have no way of triggering use of the section. It appears to be a matter entirely within the discretion of the permanent trustee. Even if creditors could trigger the section, any contribution from income would be swallowed up in repaying the state expenditure paid to the insolvency practitioner. Secondly, insolvency practitioners, as permanent trustees, are unlikely to trigger the section of their own volition, because it would make sequestration less palatable for debtors, which in turn would have an impact on practitioners' earnings, because fewer people would use sequestration.

I make no apology for saying that I believe that there are forces afoot in Scotland that have not been giving the best possible advice to individuals. I realise that there are those who will suggest that that is a heartless view, but I have always felt that one must examine carefully the direction of the route along which we are pointing people, especially young people. If we are sending them into a cul-de-sac—that is what sequestration is—we must be certain that that is in their best long-term and short-term interests.

The Bill gives us a rare opportunity to consider again in depth how we can balance the interests of creditors, debtors and the taxpayer—there is no doubt that there is now an imbalance. I make no apologies for my hope that during our debates we shall elicit assurances from the Government. I stress the fact that we have no wish for the Bill to prevent those unfortunate enough to find themselves in great financial difficulty from taking a course that will assist them to get their affairs into some sort of order and allow them to begin what one would hope would be a return to a normal financial position, in which expenditure and income are in some sort of balance.

We have a duty and a responsibility to the taxpayer to make certain that what we put into statute does not encourage people, under the private enterprise guise of opportunism, to make a lot of money at the taxpayer's expense. Sequestration makes money out of other people's misery, and anyone who thinks that it is other than a miserable process cannot have spent much time with people forced into it.

In Committee we should not necessarily spend our time examining what the vested interests tell us, but having received many representations—as we do on every Bill—we should discuss, in a non-partisan way, constructive thoughts and ideas on how to bring the whole business of debt, credit and all that they mean into balance. That would benefit the majority of people in Scotland, most of whom are the taxpayers, who pick up the tab.

I have said before in Committee that we often forget—at least, people who adopt the bleeding heart approach often forget—that in the end all debts have to be paid. Debts do not vanish; they are paid, either by the consumer who takes the services and goods after the debt has been incurred and not paid, or by somebody else. The shopkeeper in the high street has to adjust his prices, and providers of services have to adjust their prices to include an element for bad debt. That is how debts are paid for. The cost of administering the legal aspect of sequestration, where that is required, is picked up by the taxpayer. There is no such thing as a debt that is written off. Debts have to be paid for. The question is whether we get the balance right.

When we examine that question in Committee, I hope that it will not be a case of one side simply trying to reduce the taxpayer's input—although we have a proper duty to the taxpayer to do that. We must also ensure that we do not lock people into a situation in which they do not get the best advice and cannot see an alternative escape route.

I have found some of the correspondence that I have received from the welfare bodies disturbing. They seem to think that the only route is sequestration. I have read that correspondence carefully; I will not take up the time of the House by quoting it, but I have it all with me. I was disturbed at the absence of balance. I do not doubt the integrity of welfare workers, but if they want to proffer the best advice, they have a duty to ensure that it is the best.

I question some of that advice because of what I have discovered in my constituency. The hon. Members for Garscadden and for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) rightly said that we should go by our constituency experience. It conditions our views on these issues. It is always heartrending to learn about people in these ghastly circumstances, which have arisen because of a failure of control.

Does my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have any information about the way in which debt is apportioned in Scotland? How much of it, for instance, is arrears of rent? Perhaps we should investigate how rents are collected by local authorities. Perhaps the old system of weekly collection was better and enabled people to keep up with their payments because they budgeted on a weekly basis. That is how people on these estates live.

When I was a boy, Lawson's of Dundee went around the streets of Dundee picking up people's weekly payments. That form of debt collection was geared to suit the budgets of people who lived by budgeting from week to week. Removing that system introduced instability—*[Laughter.]* I do not find this a laughing matter. People who live comfortably, as we all do, frequently forget the problems of those who have to budget from week to week, as many of our constituents do. I do not mean to be frivolous when I say that we are not debating an abstract issue: it is real for those involved in it. That is why I welcome the chance to speak in this debate.

I hope that the Opposition will recognise that the Government have clearly intimated that they are prepared to accept amendments and to consider changes to the Bill. We must approach it constructively, avoiding the sort of nonsense that we witnessed during the first sitting of the Scottish Grand Committee. We must approach the Bill with concern for our constituents and others; we must not play silly political games.

5.3 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I will not follow the comments of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). He warned us against the bleeding heart approach. No one would ever accuse him of such an approach to those with debt problems in Scotland. On the contrary, he has been one of the supporters of Government policies that have forced people into poverty

[Mr. John McAllion]

and debt in Scotland for many years now. It was sanctimonious of him to make the sort of sickening speech that he has just delivered.

Mr. Bill Walker *rose——*

Mr. McAllion: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman, who spoke for far too long anyway.

Originally, the Opposition did not intend to oppose the Bill. We intended to let it proceed without dividing on Second Reading and to consider its principle in the Scottish Grand Committee. Yet here we are today after two sittings of that Committee and more than four hours of debate in it, facing another three and a half hours of debate this afternoon on a three-line Whip and on a motion which will divide the House—on a measure initially thought to be non-controversial. Something went badly wrong somewhere in the handling of the Bill.

Perhaps the answer to what went wrong can be found in the Opposition motions drawing attention to the lack of consultation by the Government before they introduced the Bill and requiring the Government to concede the idea of a Special Standing Committee. Such a Committee would allow those in Scotland who know about debt problems to come and advise us on further progress of the Bill. The experts entertain a great many anxieties about the effect that it will have on people trapped in debt.

Complaints about the lack of consultation have come from almost everyone concerned with handling debt problems in Scotland. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said, complaints have come from citizens advice bureaux, money advice projects, the care in the community Scottish working group, professional bodies involved in insolvency and sequestration—and even from Conservative Back Benchers. The hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) was one of the first in the Scottish Grand Committee to complain about the Government's lack of consultation with the professionals involved in sequestration.

The Secretary of State for Scotland recognised early in his speech that there was a perception of a lack of consultation. Of course, some complaints emanated from quarters that one would expect to complain about a Bill of this kind. I remind the House that we were told at first that this was a Bill that would end the public scandal of fat cat accountants ripping off the public purse. I have with me a copy of the front page of the *Daily Record* of 4 June, fortuitously timed to coincide with the first sitting of the Scottish Grand Committee. The headline that day was, "Making millions out of misery".

The story went on to describe why there was all-party support for the measure. Labour Members told the *Daily Record* that one firm was raking in more than £3 million a year in fees under the present arrangements. Neither the firm in question nor the Labour Members were mentioned by name in the article, although it would seem from what my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden said today that he was one of the Members in question.

We were told in the story that the Scottish National party slammed the system as a gravy train. This being a Government Bill, it was to be expected that Government supporters would support it—although, in the wake of the Danish Maastricht referendum result, we should take nothing for granted when it comes to Government Back Benchers these days. The story did not mention the Liberal Democrats—they are never mentioned in the *Daily Record*, so we should not be surprised at that.

The *Daily Record* was in no doubt about who the real villains of the piece were:

> "The men in grey suits are cashing in on a Government scheme to privatise the bankruptcy business. And their bumper fees—nearly £20 million . . . a year—are passed on to the . . . taxpayer."

I do not know where the *Daily Record* got the idea that this is a Government scheme to privatise the bankruptcy business. This Bill will achieve the exact opposite. Perhaps, like everyone else, the paper suffered from a lack of consultation. The Murdoch press got it right; it labelled the measure a Tory nationalisation Bill. Perhaps the Murdoch press was the only body to be consulted about the Bill before it was introduced to the House.

Nevertheless, given the public scandal outlined by the *Daily Record* and given the alleged cross-party support for ending that scandal by means of the Bill, it might be expected that the Bill would receive a fair wind on Second Reading and would not receive any opposition except, perhaps, from the fat cat accountants whose firms are allegedly feathering their nests to the tune of £3 million a year in some cases. However, that is not what has happened. Complaints have been pouring in from many sources and from almost everyone involved in handling debt problems in Scotland.

There have been complaints about lack of consultation to which reference has been made during our debate. The Bill has been banged together by Scottish Office civil servants and Ministers working together in splendid isolation. They have talked to no one about the Bill. They have sought no advice and they have consulted no one. They have simply tried to slip the Bill quietly through the House in the hope that the Opposition were looking in the other direction.

Fortunately, the Government have not been able to get away with that strategy. Progress on the Bill was delayed in the Scottish Grand Committee, and the Committee was forced to meet a second time. My hon. Friends have tabled a motion which has allowed us to debate the matter today. In that sense, time has been bought and people with legitimate concerns will be able to lobby hon. Members on their misgivings about the impact of the Bill on people affected by debt in Scotland.

Groups like Tackling Debt in Castlemilk, to which reference has already been made, have warned in letters that they have sent to most hon. Members that consumers and debtors will be denied access to bankruptcy procedures if the Bill is passed without amendment. They believe that as it stands, the Bill will mean that debtors cannot get out of difficulties in some cases. They also believe that debtors will have to find legal fees to petition the court for their own sequestration and that bankruptcy procedures will no longer be available to debtors who have little or no assets. Those are the views of groups much closer to the reality of handling debt problems than any hon. Member. We should pay attention to those views in the way suggested by the Opposition motion.

The Scottish Consumer Council has described itself as having a particular responsibility for disadvantaged and inarticulate consumers. It has pointed out that the right of debtors to petition for their own sequestration will require legal knowledge and the payment of legal fees, both of which requirements tend to render the new right as

nothing other than a paper right, something which cannot be put into effect in the real world. Debtors may be entitled to that right, but in practical terms, they will not have access to it.

The Minister will try to persude us that we can deal with those problems in Committee. In the Scottish Grand Committee, the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) pressed the Minister on whether the Government would be willing

"to consider circumstances in which there will be no financial bar to persons . . . getting advice"—

and the right to institute legal proceedings at public expense. The Minister simply replied:

"we shall consider those matters in detail in the Standing Committee."—[*Official Report, Scottish Grand Committee*, 8 June 1992; c. 57-8.]

Mr. Allan Stewart: I actually said that I assured the Committee

"that straitened financial circumstances will not be a barrier to sequestration."

Mr. McAllion: The Minister actually said:

"I reassure him that the Government's purpose is that straitened financial circumstances will not be a barrier to sequestration."—[*Official Report, Scottish Grand Committee*, 8 June 1992; c. 58.]

If the Minister had listened to the argument as I tried to develop it, he would understand that I was arguing that the Government's purpose is to cut public expenditure on bankruptcy. If they are successful in that, the by-product will be that people will not be able to have access to legal advice because of straitened financial circumstances.

Mr. Stewart: I have great respect for the hon. Gentleman, but I am surprised that after all this time he does not appear to have read my speech. I stated clearly:

"The savings and expenditure on sequestrations will be achieved through tighter control over the fees paid to insolvency practitioners and through the introduction of simpler procedures in small asset cases."—[*Official Report, Scottish Grand Committee*, 8 June 1992; c. 56.]

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State repeated that point when he opened the debate.

Mr. McAllion: I listened carefully to the Minister and the Secretary of State, and I have read the Minister's speech. I will deal with their claims later because I do not believe that they can deliver the kind of protection promised in the Bill. That will not matter once the Bill has passed through the House, because nothing can then be done to retrieve the situation.

I have been dealing with Tory Governments in the House for five years. I have learnt not to trust Tory Governments and especially not to trust the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) when they make commitments about political issues. The Minister's policies are completely opposed to the best interests of the people I represent in the House.

Mr. Allan Stewart *rose*——

Mr. McAllion: If the Minister is about to ask me to recount an instance when he misled the House and the people of Scotland, I will do that right now: the poll tax. The Minister was one of the most vociferous supporters of the poll tax throughout the last Parliament. However, he then stood on his head and said that he no longer supported it. He said that he supported the new council tax because the poll tax had been the disaster that we said it was going to be throughout the last Parliament when——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Gentleman should withdraw the word "misled".

Mr. McAllion: The Minister certainly gave an impression about something that was not true. Whether he deliberately misled the House, he painted a picture that could not be delivered in the real world outside the fantasy world in this place.

The trouble with dealing with issues in Standing Committee, even in respect of a Scottish Standing Committee when there must be no fewer than 16 hon. Members from Scottish constituencies on the Committee, is that there will be a Government majority in the Committee as a result of the addition of English Members to the Committee or by keeping Opposition Members off it. In other words, the minority party in Scotland—the Conservative party—will be able to create an artificial majority on a Standing Committee dealing with a Bill on matters that relate exclisively to Scotland.

I do not doubt the Minister for a moment when he says that he will consider just about anything in Committee. I am sure that he might even consider the possibility of establishing a socialist republic in Scotland, but that does not mean that he will concede it in the Standing Committee. He will consider any of our suggestions in Committee, but he will use the Government's inbuilt majority not to give concessions to the Opposition. That has always been my experience of Standing Committees under the Tory Government. They listen, but they never hear what is said. They have no intention of honouring the commitments they give in Second Reading debates.

At the heart of the Bill is the Government's determination to cut public spending on bankruptcy procedures. The Secretary of State described how the costs are spiralling out of control. He said that the costs were £20 million last year; that they would be £50 million in 1993-94 and £80 million in 1994-95. He even identified the source of those spiralling costs as he did in the Scottish Grand Committee. He said that the source was the changing rate or pattern of sequestrations since the introduction of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985.

Initially sequestrations were seen as a means whereby debtors' assets could be realised and the proceeds divided fairly between the creditors, the 1985 Act changed all that according to the Secretary of State. In 1986-87, 75 per cent. of the total of 437 sequestrations were creditor driven and came before the courts because the creditors asked for that to happen, in 1991-92, 87 per cent. of 8,500 sequestrations arose through the procedure which allowed debtors to appoint insolvency practitioners as trustees to petition the courts on their behalf.

In those cases, the funding came directly from the public purse. Millions of pounds of public money will be saved only if debtors are denied access to bankruptcy procedures that are currently available to them. If those debtors have to be guaranteed continuing access to bankruptcy procedures under a different form, it is difficult to see how the savings in public expenditure can be achieved.

If the Minister argues that, in an average sequestration, 89 per cent. of the cost of the work arises from what he describes as junior administrative grades and that that

[Mr. McAllion]

work can be handled more efficiently and more cost-effectively in the public sector than in the private sector, that argument delights me. Of course, the Minister himself is one of the great apostles of free enterprise, and he does not really believe that argument.

The Secretary of State said that the Government are taking the process back into the public sector so that they can then use market testing to put it back into the private sector. Their case is that they can make savings by putting the process into the public sector and make even more savings by putting it back into the private sector. That makes nonsense of the Government's arguments in support of the measure.

The Minister knows that, if cash is to be saved, access to bankruptcy procedures must be limited to people with debt problems. That is why I continue to oppose the measure and why I shall support the motion. There must be a Special Standing Committee. The majority of hon. Members who vote tonight will not have read the 1985 Act and will not know what issues are involved in the Bill. They will simply vote on party lines on issues that they know nothing about.

This is an important measure, which will have a real effect on real people in Scotland. For their sake, it is absolutely essential that every Scottish Member fully understands exactly what is involved in the change that will be brought about by the Bill. None of us is an expert in the matter, although some hon. Members have legal backgrounds. The real experts are in Scottish communities, working for money-advice projects, citizens advice bureaux, legal firms, accountants and so on. We need to hear from them what the implications of the measure are. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that there is a Special Standing Committee. If the Government are not prepared to concede that, it is because they are not prepared to have their Bill exposed to expert scrutiny. That is all the more reason why the Government have no right to proceed with the Bill.

5.21 pm

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): It absolutely amazes me that Opposition Members feel that the Bill should go to yet another Committee, particularly as they say that they agree with its contents. Perhaps that is simply a means of inducing an argument. To date, we have had two Scottish Grand Committee sittings; today we are having the Second Reading debate, and the Bill will then be committed to a Standing Committee. At that point we will go into the detail of the Bill.

There has been a massive escalation in costs, from £13,000 five years ago to £18·5 million today. Surely there is something wrong. Surely we need to act swiftly. If we look to the future, we see escalating costs. I do not know what Opposition Members think, but money wasted on administration—that is what much of the money represents—could be better spent in my constituency. I look to the Government to do that as swiftly as possible, and I look to Opposition Members to back them.

Mrs. Ewing: The hon. Gentleman may not be aware of the background of the legislation, but, several years ago, there were cries and calls from Opposition parties for an investigation into the matter, which could have saved £12 million to £15 million. If the Government had acted more expeditiously, that money could have been saved and spent on better prospects. The legislation does not take account of all elements of bankruptcy law. It is almost a misnomer of a Bill, as bankruptcy is mentioned only in the title. We have not examined the regulations or other aspects to ensure that we have an effective system of sequestration in Scotland, enabling access at reasonable cost.

Mr. Gallie: I thank the hon. Lady for her intervention. The Bill addresses real problems. The Government have examined it in detail, and many items in the Bill will assist better administration in future. The matter is urgent and I certainly support the Government.

I deplore the attitude of Opposition Members who complain about lack of time to debate the issues. The Scottish Grand Committee lost 45 minutes on absolute nonsense and protests about issues that have nothing to do with the Bill. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) said that my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) took 22 minutes to debate the issues in the Bill, yet the hon. Gentleman was involved in wasting those 45 minutes in Committee. I ask right hon. and hon. Members to bear that point in mind.

There is much talk about consultation with other quarters. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) listed several contacts. He talked about the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, local accountants, Drumchapel law centre, citizens advice bureaux and money advice centres. He omitted the Scottish Consumer Council. That organisation took account of creditors. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman omitted it. Perhaps he would like to comment on that. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Because three parties are interested in the Bill. There are the creditors, who are important; the accountants, who certainly have an interest and have operated in such matters in recent years, and, most important, the individuals and companies which are in deep trouble. In Committee, creditors were ignored by Opposition Members.

Mr. Dewar: At the great danger of extending the hon. Gentleman's speech, may I ask him to comment on the views of the Scottish Consumer Council? The hon. Gentleman will remember that it said:

"We support the Bill's primary purpose."

It went on to say:

"We are extremely doubtful that individual debtors will feel competent to petition the court without any form of assistance."

The council went on to say that the system was wrong and gave three specific, fundamental ways in which it should be changed and which the Government are resisting. The council said:

"We are very disappointed that there has been no prior consultation."

The Scottish Consumer Council has great sympathy with my point of view.

Mr. Gallie: I have taken much time to examine all the consultations in detail. Further, I have met representatives. *[Laughter.]* Perhaps it is hilarious to the hon. Member for Garscadden that Conservative Members take time to talk to those bodies. I have taken time to talk to the Scottish Consumer Council. I have also taken time to talk to accountants and advisory bodies. I recognise the points that they have raised and I am prepared to take them on

board. I am quite sure that the Government have also taken them on board. The place to consider them in detail is in Committee.

Mr. Wilson: We must get to the bottom of this. The hon. Gentleman prayed in aid the Scottish Consumer Council and said that it was concerned about creditors. I am sure that it is—we all are—and that is perfectly right. However, in addition to what my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said, the Scottish Consumer Council said:

"Our concern is to ensure that the benefits to consumer debtors introduced with the 1985 Act are not lost in the process of this Bill."

Does the hon. Gentleman share that concern?

Mr. Gallie: Of course I share that concern. I have borne it very much in mind. The Bill provides protection. I do not necessarily agree with every issue that has been raised. Conflicting views have been put forward. I acknowledge that. I will make my judgment, and no doubt other hon. Members will also do so.

I return to the Bill. The Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 was designed to help people who had reached a state of personal and financial crisis. I wish to concentrate on low assets cases. From 1985 onwards, the Act provided a great deal of protection for debtors from debt collectors, sheriff officers and institutions. It took constant pressure off them. As I said in the Scottish Grand Committee, it was a caring Act. For many people there seemed to be no way out. The 1985 Act gave them some light at the end of the tunnel.

However, sequestration is all too often taken up as an easy option, as I said in the Grand Committee. I was told that I was insensitive in doing so. Perhaps the tears trickle down the cheeks of Opposition Members when they look at things in realistic terms. But my heart goes out to the many small businesses and self-employed people who have extended credit terms in good faith. One of the consequences of too easy recourse to sequestration is bankruptcy and loss of jobs for others. We must take that on board. There is a snowball effect. We seek protection for individuals. We need protection all round.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North said, all too often people are pushed into bankruptcy without giving due consideration to what it means for the future. Once they have signed on the line with an insolvency practitioner, there is no way back. There is no pause for reflection. There is no chance of changing their mind. People often do not realise that bankruptcy means that for them credit will not be an option for the next 15 years. That can be important to young people who want to set up home. It can be important to people at large. We must bear that in mind. I suggest that, as we have done in other legislation, we could inject some form of cooling-off period into the Bill. I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to consider that.

What of the private insolvency practitioners? They have come in for some stick today. In many cases, these people do an excellent job. In most cases they certainly treat in a sympathetic manner the issues and the people with whom they are dealing. But others have a business approach. The current legislation offers practitioners easy access to considerable rewards. In the Scottish Grand Committee I was delighted to hear my hon. Friend the Minister say that he would examine that point.

The fact that a practitioner can pick up £2,300 to clear a debt of £750 is a bad deal for everyone—for the individual and certainly for the taxpayer. The accountancy profession recognises that there is a need for change. It has suggested that an element of self-regulation is possible. I believe that the industry is capable of achieving that and that it is sufficiently responsible to do so. However, there must be a major change in the fee structure.

Opposition Members have made comments about nationalising insolvency practice. The hon. Member for Garscadden seems to have been converted on the way to the polling booth to the benefits of privatisation. I welcomed his comments about nationalisation of the bankruptcy procedure. But I also welcomed the words of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who suggested that the private practitioners had a part to play. That is an important point and I await further developments with interest.

The hon. Member for Garscadden referred briefly to non-payers of the community charge. It is unacceptable to me that scroungers, the deliberate non-payers of the community charge who have incurred debts of £750, can look to the insolvency procedure for a way out at the expense of the taxpayer. I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to consider that point.

At the beginning of my speech, I made the observation that much of the cash currently spent on the insolvency procedure was being wasted on administration and unnecessary involvement without practical achievement. Much of that money would be welcome in my constituency. I take this opportunity to underline that if some saving can be made on administration costs in whatever way—I do not take a dogmatic approach in the argument between privatisation and nationalisation—I would like that money, all of which comes out of the same budget, to be pushed into improving the infrastructure in Ayrshire and especially into upgrading the A70 to trunk road status.

The Bill seeks to simplify the present system. It will inject a pause for reflection. It will save wasted resource. I look forward to its early implementation.

5.37 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): In the Scottish Grand Committee, the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) spoke with exemplary brevity because of time pressure. This evening, for the first time in a Scottish debate on the Floor of the House, we have had an opportunity to hear him speak at greater length. It is clear to Opposition Members that his speeches share many of the distinctive features that we have come to associate with those of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker).

Both hon. Gentlemen made reference to the appalling position of those who get into debt. It is widely agreed on both sides of the House that those faced with the pressures and anxiety of debt are in an appalling position. However, one is entitled to ask under which Government and what philosophy and attitude were so many people pushed into acquiring more and more material possessions? Which Government made credit all the easier to obtain? Now many people suffer the consequences, which affect not only them but their families.

As I did in the Grand Committee, I immediately declare an interest. I am a parliamentary adviser to the Institute of

[Mr. James Wallace]

Chartered Accountants of Scotland. As has already been said, the institute has written a letter to the Minister of State, Lord Fraser, stating how it sees the way forward and making suggestions.

Many of us who heard the Secretary of State try to give some semblance of having consulted on the Bill noted that almost all the consultation took place after the Bill was published. I support the case for a Special Standing Committee for several reasons which I shall give in a moment. However, I wish to say at the outset that if there was ever an argument for a Scottish Parliament to deal with Scottish affairs, the way in which the Bill has been dealt with is it.

There have been two sessions in the Scottish Grand Committee and today's debate. Those hon. Members who support the idea of a Scottish Parliament have never believed that we should adopt Westminster procedures lock, stock and barrel. The procedures in this place are so archaic and hostile to the proper consideration of technical measures such as the Bill, that one would hope that with an opportunity to start afresh, one could do it properly. We advocate pre-legislative committees, which could examine such issues and consider the views of accountants and of the many other organisations which have written to us to explain their worries about this legislation.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), talking about how the Bill was drawn up and launched on an unsuspecting public and profession, caused me to wonder whether the Government involved anyone with practical experience of insolvency proceedings in the drafting of the Bill. I must confess that, for three or four years, I tutored in conveyancing at Edinburgh university, without having carried out a practical conveyance. There are obvious drawbacks to that, as we are now realising.

So much could be done to improve this legislation with input from people with first-hand, practical experience. We could achieve the Government's objective. It is accepted on both sides of the House that there should be a means for people who get into debt to have access to the courts, to undergo the sequestration process—that process takes a long time—and to start anew. Creditors' interests should be properly looked after, as should the interests of the state and the taxpayer, by ensuring value for money. Those objectives are widely shared.

The present opportunity for comment makes us realise what could have been done at an earlier stage if the Government had consulted. The Bill should go to a Special Standing Committee, which would allow the Government to respond properly to the proposals by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland. The Secretary of State said that they would be considered with interest, but it is of fundamental importance for the House to know the Government's response before we deal with the Bill, line by line and clause by clause.

The question of debtors' access to sequestration procedures has been mentioned. I accept what the Under-Secretary of State said in Committee, in response to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), and what the Secretary of State said today about it not being the Government's intention, in proceeding with the legislation, to put up barriers that do not exist. However, whatever their intention, many organisations that have written to us are justifiably concerned that there are such barriers.

In the Scottish Grand Committee, the Minister referred to advice by way of representation. A letter, which I and no doubt all my colleagues have received, from Drumchapel law centre encloses

"a further Briefing Note on the Bill"

on behalf of the "Tackling Debt Group", which referred to the fact that the group had expressed concern about

"Advice By Way of Representation",

because there is

"necessity of a means test—with no scope for taking debts into account",

which might make some people ineligible and, that "limited circumstances" are "presently available" for

"clients incapable of self-representation through eg language difficulty."

Whatever the intention behind the Bill, there is concern about other procedures—not necessarily those outlined in the Bill—for example, the legal aid regulations, and concern that the position is not as the Government intend. We have also received representations from Money Advice Scotland, which pointed out:

"The concurrence of a creditor in any small assets petition is extremely unlikely"

and which believes that some of the procedures and requirements in the legislation might also put up barriers. I accept that that might not be intended, but it might well be a consequence of the Bill.

We must properly examine the Institute of Chartered Accountants' proposals and analyse some of the serious worries expressed by people who have to deal with debtors daily, and who feel that the Bill will block a route which is now open to them, or at least put a high barrier in their way. There is no challenge to the objectives of the legislation and there would not be the sort of partisan approach that might colour a Special Standing Committee considering a more contentious piece of legislation.

I must refer to the proposals submitted by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland to the noble and learned Lord Fraser, for example in relation to cases where there are assets—non-schedule 2 cases. We heard a welcome repetition of the assurance given to me and to the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) in the Scottish Grand Committee, that the Government would undoubtedly reconsider the matter.

The institute also suggests that there should be a switch in onus. Rather than the debtor having to acquire the consent of two thirds of the creditors, one third should have to object to prevent protected trust deed status, as sequestration might thus be avoided, which would further reduce any call on the public purse.

I understand that, in about 80 per cent. of all cases, there are no assets. The summary administration procedure is a welcome feature of the Bill, and it has been estimated that it might cost a fee of about £800 plus outlays, which is a considerable saving on the amounts being discussed. We need some inkling of the Government's response to that proposal, because it totally shifts the background against which the Bill is being discussed.

As another practical means to save money, it has been suggested that the accountant in bankruptcy should merely audit a sample of cases. There should be proper discussion of whether that would offer an adequate safeguard, where public money is involved.

The institute also discusses what it describes as "small asset" procedure—cases where assets are not sizeable but where a business is involved and the work will thus not be straightforward, rather than cases of consumer debt. It is suggested that the interim trustee would act, the present block fee of £2,000 would apply, and it would be up to the trustee to submit to the accountant in bankruptcy that that was the proper way to proceed. The accountant could countermand that if he thought that the case should proceed by way of summary administration.

That would reverse what is likely to happen under the Government's proposals, when the first step in what might well be a more than usually complicated procedure would be to apply to the accountant in bankruptcy who, recognising that the case would be more than run-of-the-mill procedure, would use the powers given to him under the Bill to farm it out to a practitioner at a fee. That would involve an important loss of time and unnecessary duplication of effort. If the insolvency practitioner acts as the interim trustee—subject to the accountant in bankruptcy saying that that was not appropriate and that the case should proceed to summary administration—the safeguards would still exist, but some of the other qualities of the present system could remain.

It is worth considering whether the debt threshold of £750 might be increased. A figure of £1,500 has been mentioned. That might need to be increased by order to keep pace with inflation. The summary administration also puts a limit on liabilities, which must be less than £20,000. If the process is triggered off by a lack or a negligible amount of assets, the size of the liabilities hardly matters.

However, it would be a matter of public interest if someone had managed to build up liabilities of £100,000 or £200,000 on the basis of assets of, for examle, £2,000. In such a case, something would have gone very wrong and that would require further investigation. I do not believe that we need to stick to a figure of below £20,000. I have outlined some practical proposals, which could lead to a reduction in costs and achieve one of the objectives upon which all hon. Members are agreed.

I listened to what the Secretary of State said about maintaining the local network, which is important. Since the debate in the Scottish Grand Committee, I have received further correspondence from the citizens advice bureau in Shetland, which has just been established. It emphasises the importance of quick and ready access to an insolvency practitioner. Most of those serving the Shetlands come from Aberdeen and they manage to provide a quick response because of the good connections between the two. One firm of insolvency practitioners has already been mentioned in the debate and, in all fairness, I should add that the citizens advice bureau in Shetland has no complaints whatsoever about the quality of its service.

It is assumed that, if someone approaches an insolvency practitioner, a sequestration will automatically follow. I made the point in the Scottish Grand Committee that when the insolvency practitioner is given the opportunity to analyse a person's situation, assets and liabilities, a course of action, other than sequestration, may well be counselled. In response to my intervention, the Secretary of State confirmed that other such courses would not be possible under the Bill. Once one approaches the accountant in bankruptcy, that is that. In the past, one depended on seeking advice from bodies such as citizens advice bureaux or other advisers on money. In many parts of the country, the citizens advice bureaux and other money counselling services are not readily available. That is a serious gap. Under the Bill, the Government may push people into sequestration who might not otherwise choose that option.

It is important not to overlook the personal dimension. The letter that I received from the Shetland's citizens advice bureau states:

> "Here the personal relationship between the debtor and his trustee is invaluable, hence why we always recommend insolvency practitioners who regularly visit the island. This relationship provides a source of security and benefit for all concerned, debtor, trustee and creditor. I doubt that it will exist when the work is taken over by a government department, the public already see these as impersonal."

We are considering people who are in dire straits, with very serious personal problems. We cannot put a monetary value on a personal relationship such as the Shetland citizens advice bureau described, but I fear that it might be lost.

Mr. Wilson: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the statistics, which give the breakdown by court area, support his case? Last year, in Lerwick sheriff court, there were 16 sequestrations. That hardly suggests a rush for the "easy option" as has been suggested by some Conservative Members.

Mr. Wallace: The hon. Gentleman has the advantage of having a copy of the detailed breakdown, but the point is well made.

Mr. Gallie *rose*——

Mr. Wallace: I shall not give way, as I want to conclude.

Sufficient arguments were made in the debate in the Scottish Grand Committee and have been made in this debate to suggest that the matter needs proper re-examination. As I told the Secretary of State, it is unlikely, given the timing of next week's meeting of the Select Committee on Selection and the fact that the Standing Committee—or better still a Special Standing Committee—will be unable to sit until 30 June at the earliest, that the Bill will finish its Committee stage before the recess. Therefore, the Government should turn "homeward and think again".

5.54 pm

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): I do not intend to rehearse the arguments that I made at some length in the Scottish Grand Committee. I shall confine my remarks to the motion.

I admit to being a sceptic by persuasion, but I was drawn into suspending my normal suspicion by the Government's offers—unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), who may have more experience of the Government. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), offered conciliation and even co-operation, which was very impressive. There was even a search for an understanding of the plight of persons forced into bankruptcy rather than a scurry by the Government to take back moneys from the private sector.

I was particularly impressed by the nods and smiles of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), when the arguments for such

[Mr. Michael Connarty]

understanding were made. I now realise that he and his hon. Friend were squaddies, or, rather, non-commissioned officers, on the loose and that the sergeant major was on another exercise. He has now returned. The Government's normal dismissive approach to Scottish matters has been reasserted by their refusal to set up a Special Standing Committee, which we thought would be forthcoming.

The House must ask what great concession the Government made. Was it that they would provide finances for something in Scotland or that they would concede the power to make decisions on the Bill to the majority of Scottish Members? The great concession that they nodded at and hinted at, but which they would not dare promise, was that they would listen to those in Scotland who were concerned about the Bill. I know that most Scots do not believe that. My hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East stressed the fact that they, and I, would have been wrong to believe it. Given the Government's breach of faith—the fact that a Special Standing Committee will not be established and will not hear evidence—Labour Members were forced to ensure that this debate took place.

Why will the Government not listen? Are they afraid of what they might have heard from those who would have presented evidence to a Special Standing Committee? I had hoped to hear from the accountants rather than from the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), who nevertheless did a splendid job on their behalf. I would have liked the accountants to explain how they discovered the sudden economies that allowed them to offer a cheaper deal.

I must tell the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) that the moneys to which he referred went, not into administration, but into profits. As the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) pointed out, on a time-and-line basis, each case could have been dealt with for £500 when the standing charge was £2,140. The argument about the fees charged was not about administration but about profit.

I would be interested to hear the views of someone who can calculate, unlike the civil servants who put together the financial memorandum for the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 and for the Bill. I would like to know how many cases one would reasonably expect to deal with between 1993 and 1995, given the present economic environment and the free and easy credit regime initiated by the Government.

Mr. Gallie: The hon. Gentleman has referred to civil servants' belief that, without the Bill, costs would escalate. May I draw his attention to the intervention of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), who pointed out that relatively few cases had passed through Lerwick sheriff court? Surely that gives substance to the estimates made by civil servants.

Mr. Connarty: It probably says a great deal about frugality and the way in which people run their affairs in Lerwick rather than the Government's economic policies.

I would have been interested in the accountants' view of how many cases could be processed, if the estimate contained in the financial memorandum of a cut of between 75 and 80 per cent. in expenditure had been realised. The memorandum states:

> "It is estimated that some 75-80 per cent. of the projected expenditure required to operate the present arrangements can be saved as a consequence of implementing the Bill."

I do not see how that can happen unless far fewer cases go through than at present, not to mention the estimates of the number of cases in the future.

Accountants may have been tempted to give the view on the relative scale of their largesse of £18·5 million compared with other well-known transfers of profit-making enterprises to the private sector, such as British Telecom, British Gas and the electricity and water undertakings to name but a few. I am sure that those accountants do not consider their largesse to be very grand compared with the £95-a-second profits of BT.

I hoped to have heard from the debtors, possibly through those to whom they turn when in despair. I have heard many disturbing comments today about debtors taking on credit which they cannot afford and not being frugal enough.

For example, a client of a money adviser—a 19-year-old pregnant girl living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation—had lost her job and was no longer living at home, having fallen out with her parents. Where did she accrue most of her debt? She had bank loans of £1,200, £1,100 and £1,000. Amost 60 per cent. of her debts were made up of bank loans. That has little to do with trade; it has more to do with how people who obviously do not have sufficient income to repay the debt are pushed, egged and encouraged into debt by what should be responsible institutions. That better shows the meaning of a "debtor" than those who take on debts which they do not intend to repay.

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Connarty: No. We have all heard enough from the hon. Member for Ayr for the moment.

I should like to have heard about the paralysis of debt and poverty. I have heard much about that in talking to people who deal with the problem. It makes petitioning on a personal basis terrifying for many people who are in the depths of poverty and debt. It is terrifying to many and a barrier to most. We need clear amendments to the legal aid rules to assure everyone that, when people wish to present a petition, they do not find themselves facing further financial barriers. We have heard assurances from the Government on that, but I want the Secretary of State to show that my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) was wrong to be sceptical, and that he will produce a solution to that problem faced by many people.

I wanted to hear more about the process through which people go. There is much talk about people being rushed into bankruptcy to get out of debt easily. Someone who deals with that matter advises me that the present procedure is extremely thorough. When a client asks such an organisation for help, his financial situation is studied closely. His income is maximised by checking on his entitlement to rebates, and creditors are contacted to explain the clients' position and requesting them to freeze interest payments accruing on accounts. Much work goes into trying to stop people entering the bankruptcy procedure. I have no evidence that people rush into it, as Conservative Members have been hinting.

The Government's approach suggests that bankruptcy is an option—but only after a long process. I wanted to hear about that process and to see some sensitivity toward it in the Bill. I also wanted to hear about the beneficial actions of the permanent trustees to ensure that those are not denied to people. According to my reading, they are

certainly beneficial. I accept and have stressed that it is an expensive process. Indeed, I used the word "greed" when I spoke in the Scottish Grand Committee. That may have been too strong a term, but if costs can be cut by 50 or 60 per cent. in a couple of weeks, super-normal profits were being made and there might have been an element of greed.

Creditor pressure could be stopped, not only on the debtor but on his family, because it is distressing, frightening and crippling. The trustee could stop the recalibration of power meters, when people pay so much per unit for their power that they can never get out of debt, tackle their futures and put their lives in order. People with social fund repayments to make could have those repayments stopped to allow them a breather to try to sort themselves out. That is what credit, bankruptcy and sequestration were all about and that is what the Government said that they were about in 1985. We must ensure that those measures are still available to alleviate those pressures, even though people may not have the same automatic right to go to a permanent trustee.

It is important that the Bill should respond to people's fears. If we create more fear, we shall do an injustice to the people of Scotland. The fears of the organisations that represent debtors must be taken on board. Most of them have been mentioned before, but I shall mention some again. The charge for lodging a petition must be dealt with. Would the accountant in bankruptcy deal with problem creditors? Would he give the protection which the permanent trustee gives? Would the limited assets or summary procedure be introduced, as the Government say? Would not it be so complicated that people would have to go to another agency for help? I should have liked to have heard people speak about those problems, and that is why a Special Standing Committee was so important.

I wanted to hear from organisations that supported the prime purpose of the Bill. Some have been mentioned, but I refer particularly to the Scottish Consumer Council, which, although it supported the Bill, had serious reservations about it. It said:

"We are extremely doubtful that individual debtors will feel competent to petition the court without any form of assistance . . . it would be difficult for a debtor to present a petition in the correct form."

It went on to make sensible suggestions about simple forms of petition and said that the technicalities of the reference to protected trust deeds should be deleted so that the debtor could petition without a qualified creditor moving against him. There should then be an agreement that no costs would be incurred in the courts in the sequestration process. It is important that we hear from those people but the Government have denied us that opportunity.

We need to undertake a process of discussion and education, rather than just replying to people's questions and amending the Bill in a minor way. We need to enter a process of construction and, hopefully, reconstruction of the 1985 Act, not just to answer those simple questions but to give Scotland a legal process that will allow people to free themselves from the crippling spiral of debt. A Special Standing Committee would have given us that opportunity, which is why we are debating the matter tonight. Are the Government really saying that civil servants or Ministers alone can work out the results of legal procedures? The effects of the 1985 Act show that that is an untenable argument and it is unlikely that, if done alone, it will be done properly.

Are the Government also saying—it would appear that they are—that they accept that only Opposition Members will act as ciphers for the concerns, questions and suggestions of the socially sensitive organisations in Scotland? Again, that is what they appear to be saying in denying the setting up of a Special Standing Committee.

It is important that we get around the table in a dialogue with the people who are trying to put submissions to us—accountants, consumers' organisations and debt counselling organisations—and work out a strategy sensibly and thoroughly. The present method may place us in a more defensive and protagonist position because of the Government's decision on the Special Standing Committee. I invite the Secretary of State and his junior Ministers to review their position and to help the Opposition to achieve what we thought was promised in the Scottish Grand Committee—the optimum result for debtors and creditors in Scotland.

6.7 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The Secretary of State spoke of the widespread harmony for a change in the bankruptcy law in Scotland. Speeches from the two sides of the House have shown that there is harmony on that general principle. However, I wish to look at the underpinning issues because, if we are to talk about harmony, we should seek to achieve changes to the law that would have the full support of the community in Scotland. It is clear from the representations that have been made prior to the debate in the Scottish Grand Committee and since then that that harmony does not exist in Scotland.

The Secretary of State also said that the legislation was being introduced as a result of the monitoring of the workings of the 1985 bankruptcy legislation. That is a slightly ingenuous interpretation to put on the Bill because the workings of the 1985 Act were not constantly monitored. The Department of Trade and Industry instituted not monitoring but evaluation processes in 1990, subsequent to questions that I asked in the House. So there was not consistent monitoring of the workings of that Act until that stage. That should be clearly recorded in our deliberations.

We all welcomed the issue of access which was dealt with in the 1985 Act and we want that issue to be retained in this legislation. But if we are to move forward, we should ensure that the changes that we make are effective and will work on behalf of all the people of Scotland.

There is no confidence north of the border that the Bill will resolve the problem of excessive cost, which is the essential trigger mechanism that has set this legislation in train. The Bill is, in effect, nationalisation, although the Minister hates to use that word. Alternative ways of saving money have been offered to him. In the Scottish Grand Committee, I suggested taking a time-and-line attitude similar to that of the legal aid provision of advice and assistance. He appeared to reject that idea, saying that the legislation had to be on the statute book before he could consider such issues. I find his attitude difficult to understand, as the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland has made alternative proposals. Is the Minister saying that the legislation has to be on the statute book before the institute's suggestions can be implemented or even considered?

Mr. Allan Stewart: I was saying that the present agreement between the institute and the accountant in bankruptcy is voluntary. The Bill gives the Secretary of State powers relating to the setting of fees so that he is in a much stronger position than at present.

Mrs. Ewing: The powers do not need to be contained in legislation such as the Bill but could be introduced via other mechanisms available to the Secretary of State, such as statutory instruments, to provide elements to assist him in altering the present position.

Mr. Stewart: I can assure the hon. Lady that such changes would require primary legislation.

Mrs. Ewing: I am grateful to the Minister for clarifying that. As he knows, I am not a legal expert and I am trying to get to grips with the issue as I have many worries about the legislation.

Is the Minister prepared to take a serious look at the representations that have been made by a variety of organisations to ensure that the primary legislation provides a framework that can be used to develop bankruptcy law and address the problems at the heart of the matter? That case is being put to him firmly by Opposition Members, and I ask him to consider it seriously.

Primary legislation can be amended in future, but we should ensure that any primary legislation that we place on the statute book does not have to be amended time and again to resolve problems that could have been avoided in the first instance.

Mr. Stewart: The short answer to the hon. Lady's question is yes.

Mrs. Ewing: I find that interesting, as the Minister seems to be saying that, if the Government are to take account of the proposals, a large number of Government amendments will be tabled in any Standing Committee that is established to consider the Bill.

Consultation is important because, as a Parliament, we have not addressed the causes of bankruptcy. Hon. Members mentioned the increase in credit. In an article in the business section of *The Scotsman* yesterday, Gordon Milne expressed his concern at the rise in consumer credit. We should consider the self-employed. It was suggested that the Minister might supply statistics on how many sequestration cases there have been involving the self-employed and small businesses. Such issues have not been addressed, despite requests for investigations into the causes of bankruptcy.

We need an objective appraisal of the costs of sequestration. What skills and expertise are needed? How much time needs to be spent on different cases? We should consider those questions before taking a major step forward.

In an earlier intervention, I mentioned Mark Berman, the only practitioner in debt advice in the Dumfries and Galloway region. I said that some aspects of the Bill would make it much more complicated, at least initially, for people to start sequestration procedures. Other hon. Members have mentioned the fears of individuals—some of which are physical fears. People obviously have mental and emotional worries, but they are also anxious about physical aspects related to warrant sales, with the knock on the door and all that that implies. Technical amendments contained in the Bill could be introduced immediately, while allowing consultation to take place.

Some of the proposals in schedule 1 are designed to close loopholes that exist in current legislation. Paragraph 16 of schedule 1 amends section 54 of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985, which failed to protect the rights of secured creditors such as banks and building societies by preserving their security after the debtor obtained a discharge from bankruptcy at the end of a three-year period. Section 54 needs to be amended quickly, as debtors who are continuing to pay mortgages and rent are threatened by the possibility of eviction under the provisions of the 1985 Act. That is an horrendous position in which to place people who are honestly trying their best to continue payments, despite severe difficulties.

Surely it is not beyond even this Government to consider the possibility of twin-track legislation in Scotland to introduce the Bill's positive proposals, and implement them simply and quickly, while taking the opportunity to look at bankruptcy law in general and ensure that the legislation is effective. If the Government are taking stock, they must bear in mind the Bill's fundamental proposals.

The Scottish National party will support the proposal to set up a Special Standing Committee to consult all the organisations in Scotland involved in bankruptcy. Surely the Minister must have been impressed by the fact that organisations as diverse as the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland, the Law Society of Scotland, the Castlemilk law centre and the Drumchapel debt centre —organisations from different spectrums of society—are as one in asking for further consultations.

A letter from Mark Berman in Dumfries and Galloway states:

> "There appears to have been a total lack of consultation on this important issue. In February of this year, Money Advice Scotland held a seminar on bankruptcy, at which the keynote speaker was the Accountant in Bankruptcy. At no point did he indicate that such radical changes were imminent."

It is now June and we are talking about radical changes. He continued:

> "At no point was Money Advice Scotland, Citizens Advice Scotland, The Scottish Federation of Independent Advice Centres, or the Institute of Trading Standards consulted. These are groups that deal with a large number of the 'no asset' sequestrations. There was no need for the secrecy, as all groups could have, and probably would have, been able to make suggestions that would have improved the system without the destruction of a process which has, to this point, shown itself relatively successful."

That organisation works at the sharp end dealing with debtors' problems. It knows better than any hon. Member what it is like to deal with a person who walks through the door with problems on which its representatives have to offer advice. It is on behalf of such people that we make our plea for a consultation process.

It has already been said in today's debate that the time scale involving the Second Reading, the meeting of the Selection Committee and the establishment of a Standing Committee means that there is no opportunity for the Bill to finish its passage through the House of Commons before the summer recess. I have already drafted many amendments and, if I am chosen to serve on the Standing Committee, I shall move them and fight the Bill line by line. I am sure that many hon. Members will do the same.

Why are we Scottish Members not using the weeks before the summer recess to meet organisations to try to

ensure the harmony of which the Secretary of State spoke? There is a Caledonian consensus that we need time to consider the issue. If we want harmony, we should ensure that the voice of those working in the sphere of bankruptcy are heard as the legislation makes its progress.

6.19 pm

Mr. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh, Leith): I am interested in the Bill from the point of view of low-income debtors. I have been influenced by the strongly expressed views of people in the Leith constituency who advise them.

Many such debtors have been dragged unavoidably into the use of expensive credit for everyday living expenses. Some of their debts might be called state sanctioned debts because they pay the price of Government policies, such as the poll tax, social fund repayments and enforced rent increases. Even more fundamentally, it is the Government's failed economic policy that underlies the debt spiral, with still rising unemployment and continuing high interest rates. That, rather than the too easy access to sequestration emphasised by the Secretary of State, explains the rising tide of bankruptcy.

Those in my constituency who give advice and have come to me with their concerns make three points. First, they ask why they, the experts, have not been consulted on the Bill and why it has suddenly appeared from nowhere. I suggest that it is because the Government are not interested in what happens to low-income debtors. Secondly, they tell me that the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 is one piece of legislation that works quite well. Indeed, I cannot think of any other legislation in the past 13 years of which that could be said. They tell me that it provides an escape route for low-income debtors. Thirdly, they believe that the purpose of the Bill is to make it more difficult for people to be declared bankrupt and that that is the hidden agenda of the Bill.

Before this debate, there was some evidence for that in the answer that the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), gave on 16 March about there being too easy access to sequestration. In the Scottish Grand Committee the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), suggested the same when he said that the 1985 Act was designed for trading concerns and that too many people were using it for the wrong purpose. Finally, today the cat was let out of the bag by the Secretary of State. The first 10 minutes of his speech were all to the effect that far too many people were using the sequestration procedures. Therefore, the open agenda of the Bill is to cut down on the number of people who gain access to sequestration.

There are three particular concerns. The first is to do with money, the second with accessibility and the third with counselling. Clause 6 provides that money must be paid by someone seeking sequestration through a petition in court. Clause 8 talks of fees being paid to the accountant in bankruptcy. Some of that has been explained in terms of legal aid for poor people. We are told that legal aid will be available, but there is nothing in the Bill about that. Before 1985, legal aid was not available to people seeking sequestration. Even if legal aid is made available, there will be delays, many law firms will not take legal aid work and many people will be excluded from it.

On accessibility, I am sure that everybody in Scotland would like to pay a visit to Leith where the accountant in bankruptcy is based. It is impossible for people in financial difficulties to pay such a visit. In effect, we have a system of bankruptcy by post. How can people have access to good local advisers if everything is centralised in one place?

The Bill says nothing about counselling; yet I am told by the debt advisers that insolvency practitioners give good advice to people in difficulties. That is not mentioned in the Bill. Its purpose is betrayed by that because, clearly, it is not concerned with the welfare of low-income debtors.

We are told that the Bill has been introduced because of the expense of the present legislation. Lots of dodgy figures are floating about. It is suggested that, in 1994, 30,000 or 40,000 people will be seeking sequestration—perhaps that is the Government's comment on their own economic policies. One of those who spoke to me told me that on those projections the whole of Scotland would be bankrupt by the year 2010. That may be another fitting comment on the Government's economic policies, should they still be ruling Scotland then, which they will not.

Moreover, if the Government want to reduce the expenditure, there are other ways of doing so, such as by reducing the sequestration period from three to two or one year, by abolishing the block fee or by taking the accountants' offer to slash fees. If the Bill were about saving money, those measures could be adopted. The hidden agenda is the desire to cut numbers. Public expenditure savings will, of course, be made through reducing the numbers of those who have access to the sequestration procedure.

I appeal to my hon. Friends not to be seduced by the nationalisation argument. Nationalisation does not mean anything that is run by a Government official. I support nationalisation more than any other hon. Member—I hope that I am not insulting anybody present—although I would not necessarily use the word "nationalisation". I support nationalisation only if it helps working people and those who would like to be working people if the Government gave them the chance. The Bill does not help those people, which is why I shall vote against it tonight.

6.26 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I shall concentrate initially on two issues. I do not know whether it is possible to have two nubs of the matter, but if it is, these are the key issues.

The first issue has not been sufficiently covered today. The letter from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland has been addressed to only a select group of Members, but it is fundamental to our consideration of the Bill. If the Minister is about to tell us, as the Secretary of State seemed to tell us earlier, that serious consideration is being given to accepting the ICAS proposition, the whole basis of the Bill is transformed. Indeed, much of its substance would be removed.

ICAS, having seen the Government's proposals and, presumably, recognised the seriousness of the Government's intent, is in effect saying, "Okay, the game's up. We'll do a cheap deal, guv." It is proposing in certain circumstances, and in cases with no assets, which are the great majority, to offer a deal of £800 plus the necessary outlays which, typically, it puts at £200 per sequestration.

[Mr. Brian Wilson]

I am in no position to assess whether that is a better or worse deal for the public purse than setting up a separate department, as the Government propose. If the Government agree that the ICAS deal solves most of the problem and they are willing to enter into a deal with ICAS whereby the fees are remeasured at that level, it is nonsense to proceed with a Bill whose central thrust is to set up a different procedure that would lie in abeyance for cases with no assets. The Minister shakes his head, but if he can explain to me how acceptance of the ICAS offer, if it can be called that, is not in conflict with the procedures on which virtually all our discussions in the Scottish Grand Committee and most of tonight's debate have been predicated, I shall be interested to hear from him.

The second issue has already been raised in an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty). As several hon. Members have rightly pointed out, the drift of the Secretary of State's remarks seemed to be that the Bill was all about a numbers game; that the numbers have got out of hand. The corollary of that is that if the problem is to be resolved it must be through a cut in numbers.

In the Scottish Grand Committee, the Under-Secretary, in his reply, referred to the concern that the changes proposed in the Bill might result in debtors being denied access to sequestration; in other words, the numbers argument. He said:

"I assure the Committee that the Government have no such intention. The savings in expenditure on sequestration will be achieved through tighter control over the fees paid to insolvency practitioners and through the introduction of simple procedures in small asset cases."—[*Official Report, Scottish Grand Committee*, 8 June 1992; c. 56.]

In other words, numbers have nothing to do with it. Numbers can go up. If that is what the force of social circumstances demands, so be it. But, according to that statement, all the savings will be made through cutting the level of costs per case, not attacking the number of cases.

That is obviously at odds with what was said by the Secretary of State and Conservative Members where clearly the populist line being taken is that there are far too many cases and a bit of discipline would be a great social advance because so many people are taking the easy option.

A written answer to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) seems to point in the same direction. In reply to one of her questions, the Under-Secretary of State said:

"It is clear that the major factor influencing the number of sequestrations in Scotland is the easier access by individuals to the sequestration process following the introduction of the 1985 Act."—[*Official Report*, 16 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. *821*.]

If that is the source of the problem, one does not have to be unduly suspicious to believe that the Government's measure to deal with it will be to reduce access and thereby reduce the number of sequestrations.

It is the Opposition's case, and, in fairness, probably that of the more enlightened Conservative Members, that all the talk of easy options and people rushing into sequestration is nonsense. It is not true; it is a false picture. I agree, as I think will my hon. Friends, that creditors' interests must be protected. We are in favour of protecting creditors' interests and that should be built into the Bill. In addition, people must be protected from themselves. The idea of them being pushed into sequestration or encouraged into sequestration, either as an allegedly easy option or in order further to swell the proceeds for the insolvency practitioners, is outrageous. If that is happening, it should be stopped. I am sure that there is no difference between hon. Members on that. But from what has been said tonight, there is a great difference between us on the prevalence of that practice. Certainly that charge cannot be levelled without some evidence being adduced.

Mr. Gallie: I have had constituents who have claimed that they have signed on to the sequestration process while in an emotional state without being aware of the consequences and that if they had been so aware they would not have signed on. That is a fact which to my mind is indisputable and which is part of the situation we face.

Mr. Wilson: It may be a fact, but it is certainly not indisputable, nor is it proven. The charge that the hon. Gentleman is levelling, presumably against his local accountants, is sufficiently serious to be taken up with them. I suspect that an interesting meeting would ensue. If the hon. Gentleman makes that charge, he is presumably capable of pursuing it.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Does not my hon. Friend think it rather strange that, if what the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) says is correct, there is nothing in the Bill about counselling. The evidence from those involved in the money advice centres and all the other organisations concerned was that they and the insolvency practitioners give a great deal of counselling. As I said in the Scottish Grand Committee, given that such people are in an emotional state, why is there no financial provision for counselling in the Bill?

Mr. Wilson: Those points strengthen the case that we are making for a further examination of the measure. It is offensive to insolvency practitioners, never mind to money advice organisations, to suggest that they are somehow inciting people to sequestrate, as though accountants were out in the street with a hook pulling them in in order to encourage them to sequestrate and thereby secure fees for themselves. It is not a picture that I recognise.

I draw the attention of the hon. Member for Ayr to figures with which I was supplied by the Strathclyde money advice service based in Ayr from a survey of cases in the Ayr, Irvine and Kilmarnock area, where 83 per cent. of multiple debt cases resulted in no sequestration and 17 per cent. did so result. Given those statistics, it is improbable that such incitement is going on. If it is, it should be identified and stopped. However, I have seen no evidence that it is going on, and we should not base legislation on the assumption that it is.

The hon. Member for Ayr referred to people escaping the poll tax by taking that extreme course of action. All hon. Members have had hundreds of cases of people who are in debt and difficulty because of the poll tax. I honestly have not come across one case in my constituency of anyone resolving that difficulty, or dreaming of resolving it, by recourse to sequestration. We are talking about people who are in multiple debt—catalogue, utility and bank debt. The idea that people are escaping from the poll tax by this device is fairly absurd.

I referred to the number of cases in Lerwick where only 16 individuals have sought sequestration in the past year. It was suggested that that said something peculiar about—or to the credit of—Lerwick, but looking through

a list of sequestrations by sheriff court area in Scotland I am struck not by the oddity of Lerwick but by the consistency of the position. With one or two blips, which could doubtlessly be investigated further, one finds great consistency of relatively low numbers in each area in proportion to population.

My hon. Friends the Members for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) and for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) would be interested to know that, in the year ended 31 March 1992, the Dundee sheriff court had 131 sequestration cases. That is an extremely modest number in a city where everyone knows that a great deal of hardship exists.

Mr. McAllion: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing that statistic to the attention of the House. He will know from information passed to me from the Dundee money advice project that its estimate of the number of cases of debt problems that it handles in a year—this is just one project in the city—is 12,000.

Mr. Wilson: That is a useful reinforcement of the point. Sequestrations represent only a tiny proportion of the total number of debt cases. Ayr sheriff court had 275 cases. That does not suggest that queues are forming each day to take this easy and attractive course. Incidentally, at Ayr sheriff court, the procedure has cost some £600,000. If the whole thing were wiped out, not many roads could be built on the proceeds. Falkirk has had 554 such cases, Forfar 31 and Elgin 151. Those figures are not excessive, and they do not suggest that a campaign is in operation to persuade people to sequestrate themselves.

We want the Bill to include protection for the right of the individual. We endorse the views of all the consumer organisations that have asked us to introduce such protection, so that people are not priced out of the process as they once were. The Minister told us the other day that the Government did not intend that to happen, but intention—or lack of intention—must be translated into the legislation.

The Scottish Consumer Council has asked for three specific assurances. First, it wants

"a simple form of petition which can be completed by a non-legally qualified person".

Secondly, it wants

"the technicalities of the reference to protected trust deeds deleted; a debtor should be able to petition without a qualified creditor and without having to say what the effect would be of a trustee trying to make a trust deed protected".

Thirdly, it wants

"a Government undertaking that there will be no court dues in sequestration petitions."

I am sure that the Minister is as familiar with those demands as I am, and it would be encouraging if he gave an assurance—in the spirit of what he said in the Scottish Grand Committee—that they would be observed. If he does that, we shall be nearer to accepting that the Government's aim is not to limit the number of sequestrations, but to cut the costs in the ways suggested by other hon. Members and by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland.

The Opposition felt that this was a good opportunity for the Secretary of State to show a modicum of good will and common sense. In effect, the Bill overtakes an Act introduced seven short years ago by the same Government and, largely, the same Ministers. That Act was based on a travesty of false expectation in relation to its financial consequences. Now, the Government are again taking up the time of the House, Committees and individual Members to introduce legislation that is intended to redress the calculating errors that they made in 1985. I feel that a small amount of humility is called for. It should not be beneath Ministers to accept that a bit of advice might help them to get the legislation right this time—legislation that they recognise as largely uncontentious on party grounds—so that we do not have to undo it again in a few years.

Having considered all that the Secretary of State has said since the general election about new approaches to Scottish legislation, the Opposition considered it eminently sensible to use an existing device to involve more people—lay people; people with some knowledge to offer hon. Members on both sides of the House—in the legislative process. It was a modest proposal, which was not especially partisan, a proposal that would have made this a better Bill than it will be. The Secretary of State, however, rejected it, and it is on that basis that his good intentions will be judged.

6.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said that he had experienced an unexpected pleasure in Scottish politics. No doubt that is a fairly unusual experience for him nowadays. I am not sure whether the Bill was discussed at the meeting of Scottish Labour Members on Tuesday 2 June. We are indebted to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), who wrote in the "Commons Diary" in this week's issue of *The House Magazine:*

"The day at 8.00 pm is still young and I attend a two and quarter hour meeting of Scottish Labour MPs. The Group these days is to fraternal, constructive discussion what Kylie Minogue is to Shakespearean acting".

Let us not be churlish and deny the hon. Member for Garscadden the occasional pleasure in Scottish politics. Such pleasures are rare and unexpected; let him enjoy them.

In our first debate, the hon. Gentleman said that he thought that I had introduced the Bill with gritted teeth. I assure him that my teeth are now ungritted, and I am delighted to be winding up the debate. We have heard a number of constructive speeches from Opposition Members: as well as two excellent speeches from Conservative Members: my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) rightly pointed to the essential need for balance between the interests of debtor, creditor and taxpayer, while my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) made a number of positive suggestions, which the Government will consider.

The hon. Member for Garscadden, and a number of other hon. Members, have used terms such as "nationalisation", "market economy" and "market testing". In a generally constructive speech, for which I pay credit to him, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) mentioned those concepts.

Let me make the position clear. It will doubtless come as no surprise to the House to learn that the Government are fully committed to market-testing the delivery of the sequestration service, in accordance with the principles which we have established. We shall look closely—this relates to a number of points made by hon. Members on both sides of the House—at the detailed implementation

[Mr. Allan Stewart]

of the Bill. We shall want to ensure that, wherever possible, the private sector has an opportunity to undertake the work when it can be done in a cost-effective manner.

At present, the advice agency directs the debtor to a particular insolvency practitioner, who in most cases determines who shall act in a particular sequestration. Neither the creditor nor the taxpayer who is paying for the process has any say in the matter. That relates specifically to the points made by my hon. Friends about the need for balance. In effect, the chosen practitioner is in a monopoly: provided that he maintains a good relationship with the advice agency in his handling of its clients, he can be confident of a steady stream of work.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) has moved from a stance of opposition in the Scottish Grand Committee to his present considered scepticism. Let me tell him that the accountant in bankruptcy will be in a position to introduce a much stronger dose of competition into the process. By contracting out the provision of the service to insolvency practitioners, he can ensure that value for money and quality of service are secured. The best, most efficient and most effective practitioners are likely to gain from the process. That is market testing; it is the reverse of nationalisation.

A number of hon. Members—including the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) in his intervention on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State—have rightly focused on the advice function. The hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) was among those who asked who would be responsible for that function. The Government intend to give consideration—in consultation with money advice agencies and others—to the preparation of a guide to sequestration and its consequences, which could be made available to the general public. The preparation and making of such a guide and the provision of purely factual information on the process of sequestration will be the responsibility of the accountant in bankruptcy.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the money advice organisations that the Minister is consulting include the citizens advice bureaux?

Mr. Stewart: I can give the hon. Gentleman an absolute assurance on that point. Many citizens advice bureaux give excellent advice and have developed some excellent computer software in precisely this area.

We shall be preparing a guide and will consult organisations such as the citizens advice bureaux. However, the accountant in bankruptcy will not be involved in advising an individual debtor as to whether to petition for sequestration.

Mr. Wallace: I welcome the fact that the Minister has said that a guide will be drawn up. Will advice and help also be given to the various bureaux with regard to alternatives to sequestration?

Mr. Stewart: Indeed. Both the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North and the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) pointed correctly to the fact that the majority of debt problems do not result in sequestration because of the advice that people receive.

Through the urban programme the Government have committed support amounting to £1·25 million to money advice centres in Scotland to ensure that debtors have access to good advice. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) will be reassured when I tell him that the Government have also provided core funding of over £1·4 million to Citizens Advice Scotland to assist its work with citizens advice bureaux.

Turning to the major point that hon. Members have made in this debate, I repeat the assurance that I have already given and that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland gave earlier today—savings will not be made at the expense of debtors' rights. The savings will come from two sources: more streamlined procedures and the Secretary of State's control of fees. A number of hon. Members have referred to the letter from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, which says specifically that a major contributor to the savings that it identified will be the streamlined procedures that are set out in the Bill. I am glad that the hon. Member for Garscadden agrees.

The point that has been made about access relates specifically to legal aid. Debtors will be able to apply for legal aid for the purpose of obtaining the assistance of a solicitor in drawing up and presenting a petition for sequestration. In practice, we expect most debtor petitioners to be funded through the existing legal aid, advice and assistance scheme that is administered by solicitors. That advice can be provided quickly.

I repeat the assurance that I gave to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) in the Scottish Grand Committee debate: we are also actively considering the extension of the assistance by way of representation scheme to provide legal assistance where a solicitor may have to appear before the court. Hon. Members should, of course, be able to raise questions of eligibility in Committee. That is the correct use of the Standing Committee procedure, but I give that absolute assurance about the Government's intention.

Hon. Members have referred to the provision of services in areas other than rural areas. In the Scottish Grand Committee proceedings the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) asked about the position in areas outside Edinburgh. The Bill will enable the accountant in bankruptcy to employ agents to perform any of his functions in individual sequestrations. I envisage the accountant taking advantage of that power, which will allow him to appoint practitioners in the more remote rural areas and in many other parts of Scotland as his agent, in order to ensure that a good quality of service is provided to debtors.

A number of hon. Members referred to the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland's proposals which we have received today. We shall need to consider them carefully. A number of interesting ideas are set out in the institute's letter.

Mr. Dewar: They represent not minor amendments but a fundamental change to the Bill which sets out to deal with an enormous increase in schedule 2 cases and the consequential burden on the public purse. It has been decided that that problem should be dealt with by passing responsibility to the accountant in bankruptcy. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland proposes that it should remain in the driving seat but that there should be a very much lower fee scale and simplified procedures. It is not just a matter of looking at the

proposal with interest. The fundamental question is whether, subject to detailed examination, that is an acceptable proposition.

Mr. Stewart: The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland does not ask in its letter for the withdrawal of the Bill—quite the reverse. The institute has argued consistently that there is a great deal of merit in the Bill, as I believe the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland would confirm. It has put forward a series of detailed proposals and interesting ideas. One of those is encouragement of the greater use of protected trust deeds. One would need to take account of the interets of creditors when examining the proposals. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland and others have confirmed that we are looking sympathetically at a change in procedure for non-schedule 2 cases.

A number of hon. Members asked detailed questions, one of which related to the self-employed. The statistics are unreliable, but they show that of those who have indicated their status, about 49 per cent. have no occupation or are unemployed and about 32 per cent. are employees. The balance is 19 per cent.

During the debate, Opposition Members have alleged that there has not been proper consultation. It is widely recognised that reform of the 1985 Act is needed urgently. We have brought forward our proposals after careful monitoring of the operation of the 1985 Act by the Department of Trade and Industry. The Bill was published on 8 May. It was then available to interested parties. It was considered in the Scottish Grand Committee on 4 June and 7 June, some 27 days after publication. Between then and today's Second Reading debate, nine more days have passed.

The earliest date for consideration of the Bill in Standing Committee is 30 June, merely a fortnight from now.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State rightly told the House, by then there will have been seven and a half weeks for representations to be made and considered. I share entirely the objective of all hon. Members that we should get the Bill right. There is broad agreement on the objectives of the Bill. There is also broad agreement on the need to achieve a balance between the interests of the debtors, the creditors and the taxpayer. Of course it is our objective to get it right in Committee. That is the sensible way to proceed. I urge the House to accept the Bill and to reject the Opposition's motion.

Amendment negatived.

Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading), and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills), That the Bill be committed to a Special Standing Committee.—*[Mr. Dewar.]*

The House divided: Ayes 262, Noes 294.

Division No. 34] **[7.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nicholas
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, James
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ms Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, William
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Michael
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoff
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Ms Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
MacDonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael

Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*

Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

Question accordingly negatived.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

King's Cross Railways (No. 2) Bill

(By Order)

Order for Second Reading read.

7.17 pm

Mr. Garry Waller (Keighley) I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill is a more modest measure than the first Bill of the same name, but it represents an important part of the overall King's Cross project. Before I outline the details of the proposals, it will be helpful to the House if I put the Bill in its proper context.

The Bill follows on from works proposed in the original King's Cross Railways Bill, which is now in Committee in another place.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mr. Waller: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall get a little further into my speech before giving way, although I shall certainly give way to him soon.

Hon. Members will recall that the purpose of the King's Cross Railways Bill was, first, to provide facilities for an enhanced Thameslink service across London, and, secondly, to provide a second international terminal for channel tunnel passenger trains with the best possible interchange from existing InterCity and Network SouthEast services. Thirdly, it was to provide increased capacity for domestic services at the existing St. Pancras and King's Cross main line stations.

During four days of debate in this House on the principal Bill, I attempted to demonstrate the strategic importance of the King's Cross project not only to London but to the many other parts of the country which the enhanced King's Cross and St. Pancras station would link to the capital and to Europe. I hope that hon. Members will not seek to reopen the debate on the issues in the principal Bill, which was passed on 28 January by an overwhelming majority. Perhaps if they do try to do so you, in your wisdom, Madam Deputy Speaker, will rule them out of order.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman is aware that the first Bill has not completed its passage through Parliament and is being considered elsewhere. Given the hon. Gentleman's close links with the British Railways Board, and in view of the property slump in London, can he tell us whether the board is seriously considering dropping the whole project, including the office development to the north of the proposed station site? If that is on the cards, this Bill will be redundant.

Mr. Waller: No such proposal is on the cards. Indeed, only a few days ago an important announcement was made about the new concourse building for which a planning application is to be submitted. Although there may be short-term problems when considering a Bill that will give the go-ahead to a project lasting a number of years, such short-term considerations will play a relatively minor part. The railway lands which are the essential subject of the principal Bill are regarded by British Rail as an important part of its strategy for the inter-city railway of the 21st century. As a regular user of the station, I look forward to its completion.

In the original Bill a number of new railway links are proposed to join the sub-surface station and St. Pancras

[Mr. Waller]

with the east coast main line. The purpose of the works is to improve the journey opportunities and capacity at the new station complex, especially for Thameslink and for international passengers. It will be recalled that those passengers will make use of a sub-surface station which will be linked to the existing one.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): The hon. Gentleman has so far spent all his time referring to the original Bill and the proposals for a channel tunnel terminus at King's Cross. He will be aware that only about 5 per cent. of this Bill has any direct relevance to the international station or the original Bill. That 5 per cent. relates to four minor access points. The overwhelming bulk of the Bill is about making a railway link into a concrete batching plant at a site in Holloway in the middle of my constituency.

Mr. Waller: I have devoted about four sentences to the original Bill, to put this one in context. I also tried to answer the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). I am sorry now that I allowed the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) to intervene, because I am anxious to make progress and to get on to the subject of the Bill.

One consequence of the works carried out to provide this new link will be the displacement of the Marcon and Pioneer Willment building materials plants which are at the northern end of the King's Cross site. Here we come to the heart of the proposals in the Bill. King's Cross has been a good site for these two firms, and since the 1960s it has enabled them to dispatch concrete to locations throughout the City and the west end.

The construction industry imposes extremely stringent requirements on its suppliers. To comply with BS5328, concrete should be discharged from delivery vehicles within two hours of loading. Sometimes it is demanded that unloading should be effected within an hour. To meet these stringent demands, and to retain the laudable commitment—I hope that all hon. Members support it—of bringing in aggregates to the plants by rail, other sites in north London were considered by the companies as an alternative to King's Cross. Lough road in Holloway was one of the few sites identified as fit for this purpose, both in reports by consultants hired by BR and—quite independently—by the Association of London Borough Planning Officers. It was the only site suitably close to central London for Pioneer Willment and Marcon.

While preparing for this debate I visited the site. I cannot claim to have anything like the detailed knowledge possessed by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, in whose constituency it lies, but I have a reasonably good idea of the location and of the implications that this development would have for the people who live alongside it.

Since the 19th century, Lough road has been the site of a railway goods yard and it has only recently become disused. In its time it has been a cattle yard and, more recently, a Motorail depot. The proposals in the Bill seek to return the site to something akin to its original purpose. Indeed, in planning terms, the location is widely regarded as best suited to B2 or general industrial use. As recently as 1986, it was identified as such in the Islington development plan, and it is included as such in the unitary development plan prepared by the borough of Islington in 1991, on which an inspector's report is awaited.

The plan includes the new Holloway access road allowed for in British Rail's own plans, and Islington council has already granted itself planning permission to construct the road. I suspect that several hon. Members will want to discuss that road further today.

The work in the Bill proposes to reinstate rail access into the site from the east coast main line. The works lie on BR land along former track formations in the area. There used to be a railway line, and the siding which provides rail access will closely match the track formation that used to be in place. The Bill also includes powers to construct and operate this facility, subject to planning permission. Consent has now been received from the relevant Secretaries of State following a public local inquiry into an appeal by British Rail against the non-determination by the London borough of Islington of BR's application for planning permission.

Many hon. Members will know that conditions were attached to the recommendation of the inspector. Minor road improvements have also been agreed following discussions between the borough and BR.

The railway works are in three parts. First, there is a line 1,009 m long from the Great Northern railway, now known as the east coast main line, into the site. Secondly, there is a 415 m line from the nearby Canonbury junction freight line into the line to which I have just referred. Thirdly, there is a 71 m line rejoining the siding to the east coast main line. Together, these works will allow aggregates trains to enter and leave the site from either direction without interfering with the busy commuter and inter-city traffic on the east coast main line.

I am aware that there are 16 petitions against the Bill and that many of them reflect the natural concern of local residents about the possible dust and noise levels in the area of the new plant. The use of the site was considered in depth at the public inquiry prior to consent being given. I am sure that those are the kinds of issue that are best dealt with by the Committee if petitioners wish to pursue them and if the Bill receives a Second Reading tonight.

Mr. Corbyn: In his researches, no doubt the hon. Gentleman considered the problem of the resiting of the concrete batching plant in the past by the same company at Monnery road, in my constituency. Has the hon. Gentleman had an opportunity to read the inspector's report which rejected that planning application? Similar words to those used by the hon. Gentleman in support of the new site were used in support of the other site, but they were rejected. Many of the arguments about dust, noise, pollution and traffic apply just as much to the new site as they did to the original site.

Mr. Waller: I have read the inspector's report and BR's arguments in favour of the proposal. I have also read the arguments of the London borough of Islington against the proposal and the arguments advanced by many local residents who were opposed to the development and who petitioned against it. I have also read a summary of the contribution made by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury.

At the end of the day, the inspector stated clearly that he did not believe that the concerns were sufficient to overrule the desirability of the site, bearing in mind the

considerable advantages that it would provide. Because he rejected the concerns about noise, dust and traffic, he did not think it necessary to consider whether there was an overwhelming need for the project. However, if he had not felt that there were good reasons for the consent to be applied, it could have been shown that there was a need which could not have been satisfied by locating the site anywhere else.

There are proposals to mitigate noise from the plant through the use of screening. That will provide suitable protection against plant noise and the process of loading and unloading material. The arrival and departure of trains will not significantly raise the level of noise of that busy railway route. The east coast main line carries a great deal of traffic. When channel tunnel traffic begins to use the line, the traffic will increase.

It is important to BR's future viability and success that there should be an increase in use of its lines, and I hope that all hon. Members would support that. Set against the use of that very busy line—one of the country's premier lines—it is not felt that the arrival and departure of trains in connection with the plant will significantly raise the level of noise, especially bearing in mind the agreements and conditions applied by the inspector with regard to night-time working.

Concerns were also expressed about the effects of dust. I noted that a number of those who gave evidence at the public inquiry had been to King's Cross and had expressed concern about the dust there. Monitoring has shown that there is not a great deal of dust at King's Cross. However, the plant at King's Cross was constructed many years ago and considerable progress has been made in applying dust suppression techniques.

Furthermore, the aggregates used in the batching process are damp and not inherently dusty. Proposals are included for the site for the damping down of the aggregates in the handling area. It is believed that dust levels will prove to be negligible. Monitoring of dust levels at King's Cross, where the levels have inherently been much greater than is anticipated at Lough road, show that there is absolutely no threat to health as interpreted by international health organisations.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The purpose of the Bill is to facilitate development at King's Cross. As the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) said, King's Cross is a major terminus which will hopefully be a through station at the end of the premier east coast main line. In order to gain support for the Bill, perhaps he can explain something to me. In its very expensive document entitled "On Track for Europe", BR states that it is ordering daytime trains and that those trains

"will provide daily services from Edinburgh, Manchester and Birmingham to Paris and to Brussels. Other stops are planned at Stockport, Crewe, Stafford, Coventry, Rugby and Milton Keynes and at Newcastle, Darlington, York, Doncaster and Peterborough."

The whole purpose of the King's Cross development has been to garner support from the provinces on the basis that trains will stop at major cities. With regard to the list to which I have referred, why will no trains originate from or stop at Leeds or Bradford?

Mr. Waller: I must be cautious about pursuing too far the point raised by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), because that is not the subject of the Bill. However, the prospect of channel tunnel trains going to Leeds is by no means ruled out, although I think that that would depend on the electrification of the link between Leeds and York which would enable trains on the east coast main line bound for Newcastle and Edinburgh to divert via Leeds. That might be considered and, for constituency reasons, I hope that it is implemented when the opportunity arises.

The second main proposal in the Bill is to improve access to the main works sites.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Waller: I promise to give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

It was one of the criticisms of the local authorities that the quality of access to the site was not ideal. The No. 2 Bill benefits from more detailed construction planning, and it proposes a remedy by providing three new temporary access points and by making one of the original access points permanent rather than temporary to meet the express requirements of the railways inspectorate for vehicular access in the event of emergencies. That should help to reduce even further use of the public highway and any possible congestion. It should allow swifter movement of vehicles to and from the site.

More of the construction traffic associated with the project will now be able to use major rather than residential roads, which will be particularly beneficial to residents of Wharfdale road, Balfe street and Railway street, three streets that figured prominently in our debate on the principal Bill.

Mr. Corbyn: I am not trying to throw the hon. Gentleman off his stride, but he seems to have ignored the implications of clause 9, which fits in with the question of the concrete batching plant at Lough road. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that the modifications proposed for the Hornsey road bridge fall within my constituency, as the boundary runs along the Holloway road, the northern side of which is in my constituency. Can the hon. Gentleman say how extensive will be those works to the Hornsey road bridge, and is he aware that the bridge was changed not so recently to make it narrower?

Mr. Waller: I am very much aware of the latter point. If BR had anticipated the present proposals, it would not have made that change. Nevertheless, it is necessary to build a new bridge alongside the existing one to enable the project to go ahead. I cannot at this stage answer the hon. Gentleman's point in full. However, if I can make progress quickly and finish my speech, there will be time for me to answer important points like that later in the debate, if I have the leave of the House to respond.

It is perhaps difficult for a Bill such as this to capture the imagination of the House. I hope, however, that it will be seen as an important adjunct to the original proposals.

The House should take the opportunity to allow Marcon and Pioneer Willment to remain in the business of providing high-quality concrete to central London, but, above all, we should allow them to continue to bring in their aggregates by rail. The hon. Member for Bradford, South is very keen for that to be facilitated, not only at King's Cross but in many parts of the country, and I applaud his intent.

It is certainly the policy of the Government and of the Opposition to develop opportunities for freight by rail,

[Mr. Waller]

and it commands the highest support in the House. This Bill must succeed if there is to be any credibility in that policy.

The proposals for access to the main King's Cross site are in response to the feeling that access could be improved. I hope that the measures in the No. 2 Bill will be seen as a measure of the promoter's willingness to respond to the concerns of local authorities and others.

I recognise hon. Members' important constituency concerns. However, there is a need for a concrete batching site. The public inquiry concluded that that was an appropriate site and that the concerns expressed by the objectors, although not totally insignificant by any means, were not such that the project should not go ahead. On that basis, I commend the Bill to the House.

7.41 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I oppose the Bill, and I do so most vigorously. It is a misleadingly titled Bill, because I suspect that British Rail quite deliberately wanted to imply that there was a direct connection between the works connected with this Bill and the new channel tunnel station at King's Cross, which was approved by the passage of the original King's Cross Railways Bill. The promulgation of this No. 2 Bill by British Rail has compounded that misleading impression. It has argued that the Bill is somehow an integral part of the placing at King's Cross of the channel tunnel traffic. It has sold the virtues of the No. 2 Bill on the back of that assumption. That assumption is totally incorrect.

The hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) tended to go a little bit in the same direction when he talked about the Bill being an adjunct to the original King's Cross Railways Bill. It is nothing of the sort. If the Bill were to fall and not be given a Second Reading, that would make virtually not one jot of difference to the proposals for the channel tunnel station at King's Cross.

The location of the channel tunnel traffic at King's Cross and its onward progress to the north-east and north-west is of great importance to many of my hon. Friends and indeed of particular importance to my hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell), who has argued long and valiantly in a previous capacity for such direct links to the north. None of that —the location at King's Cross or the links to the north —would be affected at all if the Bill were defeated today.

I hope that British Rail will not try to argue that anything else is the case, because 95 per cent. of the Bill is about the specific location of a concrete batching plant on a specific site in the middle of my constituency—nothing more, nothing less. To imply that it is anything more is actually to mislead the House and the public as well.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend agree that, if British Rail made assertions about the Bill, it would be unlikely to be believed because it suborned many provincial Members into supporting the original Bill on the claim——

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): But not you.

Mr. Cryer: But not me. My hon. Friend is quite right. It suborned many hon. Members on the promise that there would be daily through trains, or at least through trains from various major provincial cities. According to the publication that it recently released, that is patently not the case.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. He will recall that, in the Committee report on the King's Cross Railways Bill, British Rail was taken strenuously to task for the way in which it argued its case. I suspect that it is up to precisely the same tricks this time.

The statement that was issued by the propagators of the Bill in connection with the Second Reading states:

"This Bill will confer on the Board additional powers to those being sought in the King's Cross Railways Bill".

They clearly give the impression in that supporting statement that there is a direct connection between the No. 2 Bill and the main King's Cross Railways Bill. There is not. Again, they give the same impression in the environmental summary which is in the Vote Office. They say:

"The King's Cross Railways (No. 2) Bill contains two railway works proposals which are closely connected with the major improvements planned for King's Cross".

The works proposals are not closely connected with those major improvements. There are only two connections of any kind whatsoever. The first is the proposal in the No. 2 Bill for four new—three of them are temporary—access points to the main King's Cross works. Those are minor matters, but they are none the less contestable, and I shall refer to them in a moment, but they are not germane to the entirety of the King's Cross project. Indeed, if British Rail had wanted to, it could have introduced those new access points in amendments to the existing King's Cross Railways Bill.

The only other connection between the two schemes is the theme that ran through the introductory remarks of the hon. Member for Keighley, and that is the assumption that, because a concrete batching plant on the King's Cross Railway lands is going to be displaced—eventually —by developments at King's Cross, another site has to be identified for it. Of course, it does not have to be at Lough road. Those are the only two connections between the two Bills. For British Rail to pretend otherwise is disingenuous at best.

Mr. Snape: I might be as disingenuous as British Rail, although I hope not. If the plant is to be removed from its present site in King's Cross goods yard to the site proposed in the Bill, surely that establishes the very connection that my hon. Friend seeks to deny.

Mr. Smith: The last thing that I would accuse my hon. Friend of being is disingenuous. He has a formidable reputation for plain and honest speaking, but I fear that on that specific point he is wrong.

The Bill provides for the railway works in connection with a specific location for the concrete batching plant. There is a multitude of other possible locations. If one moves a concrete batching plant, one does not have to put it on Lough road. As I shall mention later, there is provision, for example, for a new temporary concrete batching plant on the King's Cross railway lands while construction continues on the new station. There is no reason whatever why that plant should not stay on the King's Cross railway lands. Perhaps a few square feet of office development might have to be removed from the London regenertion consortium scheme. But it would be perfectly possible to put the plant elsewhere.

My hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) is right to say that the removal of the concrete batching plant from King's Cross is an inevitable consequence of the original King's Cross Railways Bill, but the placing of that concrete batching plant on the Lough road site is by no means an inevitable consequence. That is the point at issue.

There are four new access points to the main King's Cross site. Three of them will be temporary. One is on the east corner of Caledonian road and Pentonville road. The second is on the west corner of Northdown street and Pentonville road. The first of those access points seems somewhat dangerous. I am sure that after a close inspection of the maps which have been tabled you would come to the same conclusion, Madam Deputy Speaker. Similarly, the second site lies outside the planned lorry routes for the King's Cross construction traffic. One has to assume, therefore, that the lorry routes will be changed to make use of that new access point. The second access point could also be dangerous, although perhaps less obviously so than the first.

The third new access point is on the south corner of Railway street and York way. That proposal is supposed to move an original access point midway along Railway street, and therefore much nearer to the residential houses in Balfe street, to the new south corner. However, Madam Deputy Speaker, you will undoubtedly recall from our discussions about the original King's Cross Railways Bill that the hon. Member for Keighley, who sponsored that Bill also, specifically refused to remove from the Bill the provision for the original access point halfway along Railway street. Now, we are told that a third new access point will be created, but that the original access point will not be removed. Therefore, far from allaying the fears of residents and the local authority, as the hon. Member for Keighley implied, British Rail is creating extra access points without removing any of the access points provided under the original Bill.

The new access point at the corner of Railway street and York way would require the complete demolition of the St. Pancras ironworks, a building which is considered to be the most significant unlisted building in the immediate area. There is an alternative: if British Rail did its homework properly—I am afraid that a long catalogue of instances in connection with the King's Cross project demonstrates that British Rail does not—it could have created a different access point a little further south on York way itself. That would have been much more acceptable to local people and equally good for British Rail. It would not have involved the demolition of any remarkable buildings.

The three new access points, all of which are in my constituency, do not add anything to the original Bill. Indeed, they make life worse rather than better for local people. The three access points which I mentioned are designed to be temporary. A fourth access point, provided for in the No. 2 Bill, will be permanent. It is on King's Cross road near Britannia street. It is supposed to provide emergency access to the station.

The new permanent access point is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), who had hoped to be here with us this evening but has been unavoidably detained elsewhere. Of course there is a need for an emergency service access to the King's Cross site. However, I remain to be convinced that the position at Britannia street and King's Cross road is the right one for that emergency access. Of course, it enlarges the area of land which will be gobbled up by British Rail in both Camden and Islington for the purposes of its new channel tunnel station project.

The new access provisions seem to be the only parts of the Bill which have a direct impact on the main King's Cross project. British Rail has not come up with good proposals for new access points. It has come up with detrimental proposals and it could have done better.

I note from the environmental statement tabled with the Bill that British Rail says that the provisions of the environment code of the King's Cross Railways Bill will apply to the construction of the new access points. As you will recall, Madam Deputy Speaker, we had a lengthy debate about the provisions of that environmental code when we discussed the main Bill. It was obvious from those discussions that the environmental code had not yet been agreed by the boroughs concerned. It still has not been agreed. It is inadequate. Blandly to say in the environmental impact statement that an environmental code will be in place to protect the interests of residents does not say much to the residents who will be affected.

Indeed, one must raise a fairly serious question about the validity of the entire environmental statement that British Rail has tabled in connection with the Bill. For example, under the heading "Cultural Heritage", it says:

"The planning of the King's Cross Railways Bill works has taken account of the character of the surrounding area, in particular the location and characteristics of Conservation Areas, listed buildings and other buildings of importance and interest."

The planning has done nothing of the sort. I invite British Rail to tell that to the owners and proprietors of the Great Northern hotel, which will be knocked down under British Rail's proposals. To say that the planning has taken account of the character of the surrounding area is wholly invalid. An environmental assessment report which comes out with obviously bogus sentences of that nature cannot be taken as a properly serious document.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): The hon. Gentleman mentioned the conservation area and the Great Northern hotel. In the context of that argument, he should also have mentioned the Golden Lion public house, which is also in the conservation area and is likely to be demolished. Surely that is another sign of the fact that British Rail has not considered the conservation aspects of its proposals. Many people tend to think of the Great Northern hotel as the obvious watering hole for people in the area, but the Golden Lion pub is also well known and has a certain tradition and character.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. I hope that he will be able to catch your eye later in our deliberations, Madam Deputy Speaker, so that he will tell us a little about the importance of the Golden Lion.

Mr. Waller: Perhaps I could abbreviate the expected comments about that pub. Contrary to what was said, British Rail has demonstrated its concern and is in discussions with the London borough of Camden, in whose area the unlisted public house is located. It may or may not be demolished as part of the work, but it is not true to say that British Rail has not been concerned about its future.

Mr. Smith: That is a classic instance of the way in which British Rail has acted in connection with the project—it

[Mr. Smith]

makes a proposal—in this case, for the demolition of a public house—begins to retreat from that position in the face of the fierce and logical opposition from all quarters and finally comes up with a half-baked solution.

That is what British Rail did about the access points which I mentioned, which are a minor part of the No. 2 Bill, representing at most 5 per cent. of its contents. I shall concentrate my remarks on the other 95 per cent., which concerns the concrete batching plant at the Lough road site and the railway works which will reach it. We cannot consider the railway works without considering the plant, as there will be no plant without railway access.

I shall place before my colleagues a number of reasons why we should not grant approval for a plant. The first and perhaps most important is that there is fierce local opposition to it. Several public meetings have been held. They were packed and were unanimous in their condemnation of the proposal. A number of local residents sat through the entire public local inquiry held by the planning inspector at Islington town hall, lasting several weeks. Many local residents expressed their concern in evidence to the planning inspector and many submitted petitions against the Bill.

I shall demonstrate the strength of feeling among local people. A letter from Mr. Fitzgerald, the chairman of the governors of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart school—a primary school next door to the proposed site of the concrete batching plant—says:

"I am appalled at the idea of British Rail's proposal to build two Concrete Batching Plants at Piper Close within 200 yards of the school. I would like to put forward my objection to these plants being sited at Piper Close. To think that our children will have to live and learn in such an environment is unthinkable, impractical and a disgrace to the powers who thought of the idea in the first place. They say it will be dustproof? They mean as near as they can make it, not quite the same thing . . . Must our children live and learn with windows permanently closed . . . The traffic hazard will be much much worse than it is at the present time."

That is eloquent testimony to the concern felt about the school which is next door to the site in question.

The tenants association of Tealby, Soldene, Bramall and Geary houses on the Ringcross estate has written to say:

"We the tenants association do object on behalf of our tenants and ourselves to the planning application made by British Rail/Marcon and Willment to build one of two concrete batching plants on the site between Piper Close and the railway line".

The letter lists the association's objections and highlights

"The inappropriateness of this particular type of industrial activity next to residential dwellings."

The Ringcross estate lies directly by the site in question and many of the tenants on the estate will be directly affected by the siting of the concrete plant there.

The tenants association of Shearling way, which is also nearby, writes:

"On behalf of the tenants of Shearling Way estate, we are objecting to the proposed concrete batching plant between Piper Close and the railway line . . . A number of our tenants back directly onto the railway lines and are very annoyed at the prospect of these trains running when people are normally asleep."

I shall come to the question of night-time operations in a moment, because the situation is unclear and the hon. Member for Keighley did not touch on it. The tenants association stresses that

"this is very much a residential area".

It is right to do so.

A local general practitioner, Dr. Herwitz, whose practice covers the area around the site, has also written. He said:

"I am writing to protest about the proposed plans to turn the Lough road site in London N7 into concrete batching plants. This will result in many hundreds of lorry journeys every day causing unacceptable levels of noise, dust and pollution.

A large number of journeys by HGVs in this dense residential area would result in serious hazards to pedestrians as well as to local traffic. There are numerous schools in the area and children would clearly be at increased risk. In addition, there are several day centres for the elderly and special accommodation for the disabled. These people in particular need to be able to get to their homes and facilities locally without being threatened by enormous concrete transporters. This is a residential area which includes some light industrial buildings. The industrial units mainly involve quiet processes and little in the way of continuous journeys to-and-fro by large vehicles. By and large, such light industrial factories and workshops work well together. However the proposed concrete batching plants will destroy the equilibrium of the area . . . In addition, they will also result in noisy night-time deliveries to the site. I know of many shift workers, including NHS nurses, who live near to this site whose sleep will be seriously disturbed if the proposals are given the go ahead."

That is but a small sample of the comments of local people, in positions of some authority and knowledge, who have argued strongly against the siting of the concrete batching plant at that location. Two themes of objections are overwhelmingly obvious. First, the area is residential, people's homes directly overlook the site and are cheek by jowl with it and they will be dramatically affected by the erection of the concrete plant.

The second major theme of the residents is not just the impact of the workings on the site but all the consequent movements of traffic, especially because the concrete aggregate will enter by train and leave by lorry. There will be many lorry movements in and out of the new site throughout the day.

Mr. Corbyn: Is my hon. Friend aware—I am sure he is—that one issue concerning the concrete batching plant, which came up at the Monnery road inquiry, was the short interval between the loading of lorries and the deliveries of the ready-mixed concrete? As the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) pointed out, that sometimes takes an hour. There is a lot of traffic in Islington, so does my hon. Friend think that residential roads will be used increasingly to deliver the concrete quickly?

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend may be right. I shall touch on that in a moment when I consider the traffic implications of the development, which are not quite what British Rail claims they are likely to be.

British Rail is up to its usual tricks with the main King's Cross development. Originally, it argued that that development would cause negligible traffic consequences, but it was forced to admit that some would arise. In addition, the Department of Transport estimates of disruption are considerably greater than those of British Rail. British Rail is playing the same tricks in this issue.

Mr. Michael Brown: The hon. Gentleman has referred to the noise on the site. It is important to note that that will not be caused by heavy goods vehicles alone. The concrete will arrive by train, so the hon. Gentleman should take account of page 27 of British Rail's environmental assessment, where it admits that the greatest potential for

noise from trains will be between midnight and 3 o'clock in the morning. It also admits that diesel engines will idle and one can imagine the noise that they will make. The problem is not just that of noise from trains moving into and out of the site but that of diesel engines idling as unloading takes place. That will have a dramatic impact on noise levels for local residents during the most inconvenient hours of the day.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to draw attention to what British Rail says in its environmental statement.

We face something of a dilemma because in that report, British Rail suggested that there will be at least one night-time delivery of sand and aggregate to the batching plant. Of course, that will create noise. The hon. Gentleman rightly referred to diesel engines idling, but they will also shunt backwards and forwards. Trucks will be pulled one by one as they pass through the unloading bays. The noise impact of those activities in the early hours of the morning on the people whose homes are directly next door will be considerable.

Mr. Snape: I do not pretend that the noise of trains is music to everyone's ears, but will my hon. Friend tell us whether the rest of Islington, particularly its major roads, is a haven of peace and tranquillity all night?

Mr. Smith: For once, I fear that my charitable inclinations towards my hon. Friend are departing. He falls into exactly the same trap as British Rail did in its environmental statements. It has argued that the people of Islington already have to put up with noise, so if it loads a massive amount of extra noise on them, it will not matter. My hon. Friend cannot expect the people of Islington to accept that argument, which would add extra noise on top of that from which they already suffer. I accept that they live in a congested inner-city area and that many of them live beside roads and railway lines. They accept the constraints that that imposes on their quality of life, but it would be too much to subject them to extra, intrusive noise, especially in the middle of the night.

Mr. Corbyn: Does my hon. Friend recall that in 1983 we tabled an early-day motion which called for a Londonwide lorry ban? We were not entirely successful, but we achieved a night-time lorry ban and changed the attitudes of many local authorities, particularly our own. They have done their best to curb the use of heavy vehicles at night and to reduce the noise pollution from them. It is therefore highly inappropriate that people should be expected to put up with increased noise at night, because of the concrete batching plant, when those people have enjoyed a slight improvement in their living conditions because of the operation of the night-time lorry ban on the Holloway road.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is correct. Perhaps he should have added that the former Greater London council played a creditable role in achieving a night-time lorry ban in London, which greatly benefited its residents.

We face a dilemma on night-time working. In its environmental statements, British Rail stated that there will be night-time deliveries of aggregate and sand and floodlighting of the site to enable the night-time work to carry on. The planning inspector in a recent report, to which British Rail does not refer in any of the documents that it has laid before the House, made recommendations that are germane to the debate. He recommended that planning permission should be granted only on condition that no night-time operations take place. We need to know from British Rail whether it intends to pursue the idea of night-time working or whether it will accept the condition proposed by the planning inspector. At present, everything that British Rail has proposed assumes that there will be night-time operations.

Mr. Michael Brown: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to refer to the environmental assessments of noise levels, because it is beyond dispute that BR assumes night-time working will take place. However, he has disappointed me, because he has confined his remarks to the noise caused by heavy goods vehicles and shunting. I remind him—I hope that he will devote part of his speech to this—that, to unload the trucks, a vibrating machine will be necessary to grab the sand and gravel out of them. On pages 27 and 28 of volume two of the technical reports, British Rail admits that the greatest potential for noise comes from the machinery that will grab the sand and gravel from the railway trucks. That will also add to the noise caused by the diesel engines.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman is anticipating my argument, because I had intended to consider the issues of noise, dust and the nature of the working. However, he is right to draw our attention to page 27. A footnote to that statement says:

"It is intended that deliveries of sand at night will be restricted, should it prove necessary."

Who determines whether it proves necessary? We need to know whether the planning inspector's restrictions on night-time operations will be accepted by British Rail. The papers which British Rail has tabled in the House show that it will not accept that restriction.

Mr. Waller: British Rail has accepted the condition applied by the planning inspector that there should be no night-time deliveries of aggregates to the site. It may have been thought that, compared with the large amount of traffic on the line, that was a relatively minor factor. Nevertheless, British Rail has accepted that, despite the fact that it causes some disadvantage. The limited number of deliveries at night would have been advantageous to British Rail, but it accepts the condition that the planning inspector has applied to his recommendation.

Mr. Smith: In that case, we are making some progress. We now have an acceptance by British Rail of the planning inspector's recommendation.

However, as the planning inspector pointed out, an inevitable consequence of reduced night-time activity on the site would be increased day-time activity. Therefore, although local residents are delighted that there will be no prospect of work until the small hours of the morning, the consequences of that must be taken into account.

The hon. Member for Keighly briefly mentioned the history of the site, and it may be appropriate if I deal for a moment or two with that subject. The site is interesting and has served many purposes in its lifetime. It was originally used for sidings, cattle pens and the premises of forage merchants. It was very much connected with its location directly beside the railway. It went through a long and tortuous history of different tenancies, uses and applications for planning permission.

It is worth noting that in 1962 British Rail declared the site to be surplus land and offered it to London county

[Mr. Smith]

council as a possible site for housing. That seems to show that, 30 years ago, British Rail felt that the best use for that site was not the use that is now proposed but something quite different. It is worth noting also that proposals have been made on several occasions for the creation of a concrete batching plant on the Lough road site. In 1970, the London borough of Islington turned down an application, giving as grounds for doing so the disturbance and noise that would be created for the occupants of an estate that was then under construction, which subsequently became the Ringcross estate, directly beside the site on which the Bill focuses.

The latest position is that British Rail, in association with the two concrete companies, has submitted two different applications for concrete batching facilities on the site. The Department of the Environment inspector has considered the matter, there has been a lengthy public local inquiry and vigorous local opposition has been expressed to the proposal. The inspector's report was issued only a few weeks ago, with the important proviso of no night-time working. I regret to say that it does not accept the opposition of local residents and the borough but recommends approval of the concrete batching plant. However, it clearly says that harm will be done to the amenities of local residents.

The inspector then develops the remarkable argument that, because the site is destined in the local plan for general industrial use, it does not matter what kind of industrial use the land is put to because everyone will accept that there will be disturbance and noise. There is a world of difference between an industrial use that it is possible and sensible to locate next door to residential accommodation and industrial use that it is not sensible to locate next door to residential accommodation. A concrete batching plant falls firmly in the latter category. I fear that the planning inspector has not accepted what seems to be a common-sense argument put strongly by local people.

Everything now depends on the Bill. If it does not go ahead, the concrete batching plant will not go ahead. But if it proceeds and it receives approval from both Houses of Parliament, the concrete batching plant will go ahead and many of my constituents will be directly damaged and disadvantaged by that fact. That is why I cannot accept the proposal.

Mr. Michael Brown: Does not the hon. Gentleman think that it is a fundamentally flawed way of going about matters to go first to the planning authority, then hold a public inquiry and, lastly, go to the Secretary of State? Is it not presumptuous to try to present a fait accompli to Parliament? If British Rail wanted to go ahead with the project, would it not have been more courteous to come first to Parliament with its proposals for legislation and, only after Parliament had determined whether the Bill should go ahead, hold a public inquiry? Was it not presumptuous of British Rail to say to the House, "Well, we have held a public inquiry and have the Secretary of State's permission, so will you kindly rubber-stamp it?"

Mr. Smith: Great as my respect is for the hon. Gentleman, I do not follow his argument entirely. I have long argued that the whole private Bill procedure is nonsense. It is no sensible way to make proper decisions about local planning matters, which is basically what the Bill is about, or strategic principle decisions, which is what the main King's Cross Bill is about.

Other matters also need to be taken into account. In his opening remarks, the hon. Member for Keighley said that there was no alternative site and that, as a result of the removal of the batching plant in the King's Cross development, the new batching plant had to be located in Lough road because there was nowhere else for it to go. He said that everybody else had had a look and had come to the conclusion that it must be located at Lough road. That is explicitly stated in the environmental statement issued by British Rail.

But we are talking about a fairly substantial area. The way in which concrete is produced at a batching plant means that it can be transported from a large number of locations to central London. It does not have to come from the King's Cross or Holloway district but could come from any region within a suitable mileage of central London.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) mentioned Monnery road public inquiry and the inspector's report. That involved another proposal for a concrete batching plant—in his constituency, not mine—which attracted similarly fierce opposition from local residents. I am pleased that, in that case, the inspector saw sense and decided that the proposal should not go ahead. The subject of alternative locations arose during that inquiry. The Secretary of State's inspector said that there was a potential site at Juno way in New Cross.

Page 42 of the inspector's report stated that the potential site at Juno way

"would be able to serve areas to the south of the Thames now operated from King's Cross."

It also stated:

"I do not accept that the River Thames acts for practical purposes as a complete barrier to lorry movement."

It is clear from the inspector's report on Monnery road that the new site proposed at Juno way in New Cross could serve exactly the purpose proposed for the site at King's Cross. Since then, permission has been granted to develop the Juno way site as a concrete batching plant, so an alternative site does exist; for anyone, including British Rail, to pretend that it does not is not a valid argument.

New Cross is not the only alternative site and the question must be asked whether British Rail has looked closely enough at the land it owns at King's Cross. The proposals for the new international station at King's Cross touch on only a small proportion of British Rail's lands at King's Cross. There are proposals for a massive development of the remainder of those railway lands by the London regeneration consortium. I am by no means convinced that it is impossible to find a corner of the King's Cross railway lands that could be used for the relocation of the present concrete batching plant.

At a briefing meeting held in April 1991 on its King's Cross development proposals, British Rail said that it intended to build two concrete plants in the north-west corner of the King's Cross railway lands site for the period of redevelopment and construction of those lands. If it can build two concrete plants on its own King's Cross land for the duration of the King's Cross development, why on earth can it not have two concrete plants to last beyond the time of its redevelopment of the King's Cross railway lands at that location?

I cannot accept that there is no alternative to the Lough road site; there are clear alternatives, two of which I have already identified. I am sure that, if we combed the whole of central and inner London for alternative sites, we could come up with a considerable number of other alternatives.

Mr. Corbyn: I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware —although he has not mentioned it—that during the Monnery road and Lough road inquiries the issue of likely future demand for ready-mix concrete was also mentioned. I wonder whether we are planning for over-production of the material and whether we may end up with far too many facilities for producing it to meet the demand.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is correct. We all know what has happened to the construction industry in recent years. There is 25 per cent. over-capacity in office space in London. The demand for concrete has fallen substantially in recent years. We hope that the construction industry will pick up, although I doubt that it will, given Government policies. We must seriously question whether there is a need for the two plants to continue in existence or whether the need for concrete in the inner London district cannot be met by other existing plants, without dumping a new one in the middle of a residential district.

There are other worries, some of which the hon. Member for Keighley mentioned. There is much concern about the dust that may be generated by the development. I accept that British Rail and the concrete companies say that the activity will be enclosed, the essential operation will be boxed in by protective layers and the process will be subject to dampening.

However, two factors must be borne in mind. First, no such plant has ever been built. There is not a concrete plant in this country with an enclosed operation and the damping-down facilities proposed by British Rail for the King's Cross site. The inspector's report identifies the problem and states that he cannot make a judgment on whether such mechanisms will work, because there is no such plant up and running for him to look at.

The second factor is that, if the protective devices are to work, there must be immaculate housekeeping at the site and everything must be done entirely by the book. From the moment they set foot on the site to the moment they leave, people must abide by the rules. I expect that, in the normal course of operations of a concrete batching plant, there will be quite a lot of hasty, perhaps understandable, breaches of the guidelines and rules. The necessity for closing doors and ensuring that everything is shut may be forgotten in haste. It may well be that the site will not be run absolutely according to the rulebook each and every day in each and every year. Therefore, there is a danger that dust will be created, with a serious impact on local people.

Mr. Waller: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the concrete batching plant will be subject to the increasingly stringent regulations set out in the Environmental Protection Act 1990? The enforcement authority will be the London borough of Islington, which as an ultimate sanction could require the closure of the concrete batching plant if the regulations were not met. Will that not be a considerable incentive for everyone involved with the plant to ensure that the rules are obeyed?

Mr. Smith: I am sure that the excellent environmental health officers of the London borough of Islington will do everything possible to ensure that the site is operated in accordance with the rules and the commitments presently being given by British Rail. But what will happen when there is blisteringly hot weather in the summer and all the doors and hatches in the concrete batching plant, which are supposed to be kept shut, are open because of intolerable heat? One can fully understand how that might occur.

Roller shutters will be constantly opened and shut to allow access into and out of the various site facilities. Are we to say that no dust will ever escape when those shutters are raised or lowered? I would not accuse anyone of bad faith, but in the normal operation of such a site it will be impossible to maintain the absolute standards on dust that British Rail promises.

Mr. Corbyn: In response to the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), my hon. Friend made an important point about the likely dust levels inside the plant. We are moving into uncharted waters here. Does my hon. Friend agree that Islington's excellent environmental health service will be put in an impossible bind? It will have to ensure reduced dust levels surrounding the plant while being required to look after the health, safety and welfare of those who work in the plant, where dust levels will be high. I wonder whether we are building a plant that will be a complete monster for all concerned.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. One of my sadnesses is that the creation of the concrete batching plant will not provide any employment for local people —it is intended, probably rightly, to move the existing employees from the King's Cross site to this site—but their health and safety must be considered.

I have already touched on the problem of site noise. The site is directly next door to residential accommodation. Noise will come not simply from train deliveries and shunting operations but from lorries coming empty to the plant and leaving full from it. They will rev their engines in low gear and grind their gears coming up out of the low-lying site to reach the levels of the main roads surrounding the site. There will be many noisy operations on the site, such as the descaling of the revolving drums on the backs of the lorries. Local residents will have to put up with all that.

In addition, there will be the impact of train movements. People living in the surrounding area already experience considerable noise disturbance from the trains using the main-line tracks. The vibrations can be felt as far away as Hartham road, which is a considerable distance from the site. Although everyone in the area accepts that no one living in close proximity to a railway, as I do, can expect a wholly quiet, noise-free existence, they are entitled to ask questions about the extent of the additional noise which is likely to be imposed on them. We are talking here not just of inter-city trains or normal transport but of trains carrying extremely heavy materials on to the site.

There is an additional problem. Some houses in the immediately surrounding streets are already experiencing subsidence from the vibrations from the railway lines. Therefore, in addition to noise and disturbance, there may well be gradual structural damage to properties immediately beside the lines.

[Mr. Smith]

It is worth noting that only a few years ago British Rail sold land for housing, which is now known as the Heddington Grove estate. A year later, it deliberately set about preparing these proposals for a concrete batching plant and associated works that will make life a misery for those who live in those houses.

Mr. Michael Brown: I have a copy of the London county council planning and building regulation document of 22 January 1963—document TV51—which specifically designates the land for housing. There is absolutely no doubt that in those days the London county council architects department had information about the site from the principal housing architect:

"Railway surplus lands, borough of Islington. Proposed use: housing."

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman, who has done much more research into this matter than British Rail ever dreamed of, is right to draw particular attention to that.

In addition to the noise of train movements, traffic will be generated by the lorry movements into and out of the site. British Rail airily tells us in its environmental assessment that that will not affect residential roads. I am afraid that the planning inspector disagrees. He notes that the traffic generated by the concrete batching plant at Lough road would include a considerably higher proportion of heavy goods vehicles than would be generated by any other form of industrial development on the site. He accepts that point, which has been made forcefully by local people.

The inspector goes on to address the question of where the HGVs will go and what will happen to some residential streets. He lists those most likely to be affected as Mackenzie road, Hemingford road and North road, and adds that there will be others. All are residential streets. The inspector points out that they are reasonably wide residential streets. That does not mean that people do not live in them. In all those streets people living in houses and flats will face a massive increase in disturbance from traffic as a direct result of the plant. It is nonsense for British Rail to claim that there will be no impact on residential streets.

The direct access to the site will be from Caledonian road. At rush hours, it is extremely busy, with long queues of traffic stretching past the site. There are residents on Caledonian road, although it is a main traffic artery, and they, too, will be affected. Obviously, the traffic that at present uses the road—not necessarily HGVs—will try to find other ways of bypassing the extra traffic jams that will be created by the HGVs that will use the road as a result of the construction of the site.

Clearly, there will be a dramatic traffic impact on all the surrounding residential areas. It is high time that British Rail owned up to that fact. The additional traffic desperately worries many people who live in the surrounding area.

Other issues have to be addressed. There is the disruption to the flow of existing traffic that will be caused by some of the proposed railway works. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North will want to say a little about the changes to the Hornsey road railway bridge which are proposed in the Bill and which affect his constituency.

I defy anyone to look at the before and after drawings of the Hornsey road railway bridge that are contained in the environmental assessment published by British Rail and not be horrified at the proposed change to the Hornsey road bridge which forms the immediate sight line for all people walking or travelling up and down Hornsey road from Holloway road. That change will have a dramatic impact on the visual environment of the area.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend has obviously looked at the environmental impact notes published by British Rail. Does he agree that the Hornsey road bridge drawings are completely misleading and that it is about time somebody in British Rail learnt how to do three-dimensional drawings so that we can see the impact of the change? That would be a great step forward. At first glance, there appears to be no difference whatever.

Mr. Smith: Certainly there appears to be a difference. I suspect that in reality the difference would be far worse than what is already rather alarmingly portrayed in the documents.

In addition, a clause in the Bill abolishes rights of reverter in connection with the proposals. We all know what the Committee on the King's Cross Railways Bill said about the abolition of the rights of reverter. It was dubious about that concept in relation to the King's Cross Railways Bill. I suspect that any Committee that might conceivably be established if we were to give the Bill a Second Reading would wish to take a similarly sceptical attitude to the abolition of rights of reverter in the Bill.

Mr. Michael Brown: Is not the answer to the question posed by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) contained in the language used by British Rail, which would be worthy of a good estate agent or even a bad one? Describing the new Hornsey road bridge, it says:

"The current bridge comprises three brick arches and has some visual character."

There is no doubt that even British Rail is basically admitting that the bridge is rather attractive, but the next sentence gives the game away. It says:

"The new bridge would be of a radically different design."

Does that not give the game away? Is that not, in estate agents' speak, basically admitting that the bridge will be a visual horror?

Mr. Smith: That is correct. A cursory glance at what is proposed in relation to the bridge, which is of considerable visual importance to the amenity of that area, will lead anyone to the conclusion that what British Rail proposes will be an absolute horror.

Mr. Cryer: Would my hon. Friend care to glance at the list of costs supplied with the Bill by the promoter, in which he will see that the bridge will cost just under £2 million? I can assure my hon. Friend that that would go a long way towards providing the rolling stock on the Leeds-Bradford electrification. That cannot be provided at the moment because the Industrial Bank of Scotland, which is arranging for the leasing—following the Government's insistence that the rolling stock should be leased—is saying that it wants a guarantee that, if the railway is privatised, the organisation that takes over the railway from the passenger transport authority will be able to pay for the leasing of the trains. Is it not a remarkable contrast that an important electrification scheme in the north is being placed in great difficulties because of that

bizarre leasing insistence by the Government, yet British Rail is prepared to spend almost £6 million on something that is unnecessary?

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend correctly identifies the overall cost of the works in the Bill of some £5·5 million, a high proportion of which relates to the Hornsey road railway bridge. Is it not barmy that here we have a proposal which will do no one any good, which is not material to the King's Cross main proposal for a channel tunnel station, which will do enormous damage to the lives of people in the immediate area and which no one in that immediate area wants, yet it is gobbling up £5·5 million which could much better be spent on other railway improvements, the purchase of rolling stock and such like, for which people are crying out in other parts of the country? One must seriously ask whether British Rail has its priorities right.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend mentioned investment. I assure him that, if the rolling stock programme for the Leeds-Bradford electrification——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The Leeds-Bradford line is not included in the Bill. I allowed the hon. Gentleman to develop his initial intervention, but I hope that we can return to either the siting of the concreting plant or the passenger terminal.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is with the Bill a list of expenditure amounting to £5,342,000 and I should have thought that it was legitimate to show where that money could be better spent as an example of the way in which costs are incurrred by the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has already given one example and appeared to be repeating it.

Mr. Smith: I am sure that my hon. Friend is simply seeking to assist the House in setting our discussions in an appropriate context.

I know that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are fond of and know well the streets and estates of Islington. You will, I suspect, share my horror at the Bill. I stress—this is an extremely important point to remind hon. Members, especially my hon. Friends, of—that the Bill has virtually nothing to do with the channel tunnel station at King's Cross and the onward use of that station for links to the north-east and the north-west. The minor matters of access points could easily be dealt with elsewhere.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): In the past 75 minutes, my hon. Friend has spoken mainly about planning issues, which I assume were fully considered by the planning inspector at the inquiry. Were the points that my hon. Friend has made now at such length made at the planning inquiry and did the inspector address the remarks made by my hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who represent the borough of Islington?

Mr. Smith: I made representations to the inquiry. I did not say as much as I have said in the House, but some of what I have said tonight I also said to the inquiry.

If the Bill did not proceed tonight, the main King's Cross proposal would not be damaged or delayed in any way. If it is passed, the Bill will lead to the establishment of a concrete batching plant which is fiercely opposed and resisted by local people. The plant is not needed at the proposed location in any event, because alternatives exist. At times, it will generate dust, fumes, noise and disruption for people living nearby. It will result in train movement that will disturb and distress those people. It will generate damaging traffic impacts in the surrounding residential streets.

Much of the Bill deals with the protection of highway authorities, undertakers, telecommunications services and water authorities, but it contains nothing about the protection of local residents. It must not be assumed that, just because the local residents live in an inner-city area, they should be forced to put up with what no one else would endure. They are being asked to put up with work going on just beneath their windows, throughout the day and possibly at night. I believe that their interests should be taken into account, and I am here to represent them. Because I know what they think, I believe that the House should refuse point blank to give the Bill a Second Reading.

9.1 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I oppose the Bill, and I ask the House to consider seriously what has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). Most of the works envisaged in the Bill would take place in his constituency: as I said in an intervention, the constituency boundary lies on the Holloway road, and the northern part of the scheme falls within the Islington, North constituency—that is, the works around the Hornsey road bridge and the new line that links up with the main line near Finsbury park.

My hon. Friend's last point was important. I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) is not in the Chamber now. He said that there was already a good deal of noise and disturbance in the borough of Islington. That is true. Islington is an inner-city area, and a good deal of road and railway traffic goes through it. We know that because we live there and have to suffer it. Over the years, however, efforts have been made to reduce the number of heavy vehicles driving through the borough, with some success—I refer particularly to the night-time lorry ban—and conditions have improved slightly.

It is ridiculous to suggest that, because there is already a lower standard of life than there should be in an inner-city area, the establishment of a concrete batching plant there does not matter. Does that mean that people living in an area of poor environmental quality must be consigned to live permanently in an area of ever-decreasing environmental quality? That surely is not the function of the Bill, the House or individual Members of Parliament.

Would Members of Parliament want a concrete batching plant to be established in their constituencies alongside a new housing development? Would they want British Rail, by sleight of hand, to sell the housing development land to people who moved in on the basis that they were moving into a residential area, and that further housing would be built? That is what the land search would have revealed, as was pointed out earlier by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown). British Rail has behaved very unfairly.

British Rail is very good at lobbying tactics. It spends an awful lot of money and time on such tactics, and it has

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

managed to convince a good many hon. Members that only the narrow self-interest of a few London Members prevents it from establishing direct links with the channel tunnel ports and route. That is complete nonsense. During the debate on the King's Cross Railways (No. 1) Bill, it was clear that some hon. Members honestly believed that freight traffic would go through King's Cross, and that our opposition to the terminal that the Bill proposed would somehow prevent industrial development in the north-east, north-west, Scotland and Wales. That is utter and complete nonsense. Fortunately, my hon. Friend was able to expose it for what it was.

British Rail now suggests that, if the concrete batching plant cannot be put in Lough road, the opportunity to revitalise the British economy by means of the channel tunnel connection with Europe will be lost and that that will be due to the selfishness of a few residents who live alongside the proposed concrete batching plant site in that road. It is about time that British Rail was called to account for its lobbying methods and its misinformation.

My constituency includes Monnery road, the previously proposed site for the concrete batching plant that was referred to by my hon. Friend. Reference was also made to it in the inspector's report. We were told exactly the same story—that unless the Monnery road residents were prepared to put up with a concrete batching plant alongside their homes, vast lorry movements each day, the delivery at night of aggregates and all the dust that goes with it, they would be responsible for the failure of the King's Cross enterprise. That was complete and utter bunkum. Their campaign, in which I was delighted to play a part, was successful. They persuaded the inspector not to grant permission for the use of that site. Unfortunately, Willment Ready Mix Concrete and the other company have moved down the road and are trying to develop the Lough road site.

I do not believe that serious consideration has ever been given to finding alternative sites. British Rail is keen to move the concrete batching plant away from its existing site because land values north of King's Cross for office development are potentially higher than the value of disused railway land around Lough road. We are expected to welcome this concrete batching plant into the borough of Islington because money can be made out of the sale of the existing site.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend agree that this is not entirely British Rail's fault? Is it not largely the Government's fault through imposing financial restrictions on British Rail that force it to look at every means of obtaining revenue from selling off its land? Obviously it favours selling off the most valuable land areas—hence British Rail's promotion of the Bill. If the Government provided adequate investment for British Rail, the Bill would be unnecessary.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend has made a very good point. He made a similar point on previous occasions, and he was right to do so. I share his general support and enthusiasm for railways and for rail transport in general, believing it to be more environmentally friendly than road transport and also believing it to be the proper way to develop this country's infrastructure.

Mr. Gunnell: Except in Islington.

Mr. Corbyn: No, my hon. Friend is entirely wrong. I am not opposed to the development of the railway infrastructure in Islington, nor is my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury. We spend a great deal of time encouraging people to use the railways in our borough because we suffer the consequences of selfish motorists driving in and out of London, polluting our atmosphere, when they should be travelling by train. We are talking here about an industrial development taking place in a residential area because British Rail has been told by the Government to maximise its income from the sale of its land around King's Cross site. To suggest, as I am sure my hon. Friend did not intend to do, that we are putting forward a "not in my back yard" scenario is simply not true. What we are asking the House to consider is whether it makes good sense to put the concrete batching plant on the proposed site.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury referred in his speech to the problem of the dust created in the area surrounding the proposed concrete batching plant. It is a very serious issue. Wherever a concrete batching plant may be sited and however well it may be managed, it will produce a lot of dust, for those who live in the area, for those who work in the area, or for those who live in the roads along which the concrete is subsequently delivered. They may also be affected by the slurry that is dropped on the roads, which subsequently dries out.

Background dust levels throughout inner London are excessively high. We are conducting studies into the increase in childhood asthma and respiratory illnesses in inner London areas. The results are startling and frightening. I suggest that those who adopt a rather cavalier approach and say that one can resolve the dust problem by encasing the building in a steel shell should think again, because the dust is carried beyond the building. As I said in an intervention on my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury—and I think that he agreed—even if one were to encase the building in a steel shell as proposed, there will be occasions when shutters must be opened or closed to allow the trains or lorries in or out.

Another problem is the likely high levels of dust within the plant, making it extremely dangerous for those who work there. We should think more about the health and safety of everyone involved. If the plant is on a restricted site as proposed, it will be difficult to solve the dust problem.

In his report, which was sent to the Department of the Environment at the end of the inquiry in May this year, the inspector examines in detail the dust problem in a case made by the London borough of Islington. He states that concrete batching is now a prescribed process under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and that these plants will require authorisation from the council under that Act. Under this procedure, the council will be able to ensure that the best available technique not entailing excessive cost is used. It is accepted that the appellants are likely to meet acceptable standards.

That is true, because they are so vague. He goes on to deal with the

"serious problems of increasing dust levels all around this particular plant if the construction goes ahead."

I ask those supporting the proposal to think seriously about the dust problems that are likely to accompany it.

I believe that the Lough road site was chosen merely because it happens to be there—for no greater or lesser reason than that. It happens to be there and happens to be a convenient piece of land which British Rail finds that it can use. In our consideration of the Bill, I should have thought that we would first consider the sanity of moving the plant at all. As I said, I think that the move is motivated largely by the potential land value gains that could be made by moving the site from the King's Cross area.

Secondly, we should consider the danger of the site's proximity to existing housing, schools and churches. It is a residential area, and any hon. Member who has been involved in campaigns to try to improve the environment and look after his constituents must be aware of the strength of feeling that goes with opposition to such a plant. Although the inspector's report does not always draw the conclusions that some of us would wish, it at least recognises the strength of feeling.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury asked, are the children who live in the area to sit in a school where the windows cannot be opened? Who is to clean the windows every day to ensure that sunlight gets in when the dust flies around in the dry heat of summer, as already happens?

There will also be increasing traffic movements in the area. It is proposed that there will be three train movements a day running down the new line to deliver the aggregate to the plant itself. There will also be a large number of lorries leaving the site throughout the day. Those lorries filled with wet concrete will have two hours at the most to reach their destinations. In some cases, contractors demand one-hour delivery times.

It is already a heavily trafficked part of London. Most roads in the borough run north to south. Like most roads in north London they are routes in and out of central London. There is increasing pressure on the borough from people trying to use it as a bypass to the City through the Marylebone road, which means more pressure on east-west roads.

A considerable amount of work has been done on the borough's roads—width restriction, road humps and other measures—to try to reduce the amount of heavy goods vehicles using the side roads. If the plant goes ahead, I predict that there will be far more pressure to prevent heavy goods vehicles using residential roads. Such proposals are usually opposed by the emergency services, in some cases for understandable reasons. In turn, that generates greater traffic on the remaining main roads, greater congestion and greater difficulty in delivering the concrete within the one or two hours prescribed.

The construction of the Holloway relief road which accompanies the proposal will increase traffic along the Hornsey road and across the Holloway road. I believe that it will become something of an alternative route into central London. Many of us do not want that. We do not believe that the future of the city lies in increasing road traffic by constructing such roads. The construction of the road is a by-product of the building of the concrete batching plant.

Mr. Waller: I must correct the hon. Gentleman. The London borough of Islington gave itself permission to construct the Holloway access road before the planning inquiry, and it objected to the proposal for the Lough road site. Bearing in mind the fact that the Holloway access road will generate more continual noise than anyone expects from the concrete batching plant, I wonder whether the hon. Members for the two Islington constituencies objected to the borough's giving itself permission to construct the road.

Mr. Corbyn: I have never favoured the construction of that relief road, because of the increase in traffic that it would bring in London. In general, I am against the construction of new roads in London, because they simply increase the traffic problem. We must look for a public transport solution to London's problems. The hon. Gentleman's question does not present me with a difficulty.

Although the council has granted itself permission for the construction of the road, the finances are not available, whereas part of the money involved in the construction of the concrete batching plant will be spent on the construction of that road—unless I am sadly mistaken, in which case the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) or my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury will quickly correct me.

Page 24 of volume II of the environmental statement gives existing noise levels for nearby residential users. Later, the same document estimates likely noise levels if the proposed works go ahead. I am in no position to challenge the figures or the method used to produce them, but I believe that there will be an increase in noise for people living in tower blocks on the Harvest estate—the large estate to the north of the Holloway road, which contains 18-storey tower blocks. Those people already suffer considerable noise from both roads and railways. The roads immediately surrounding Hornsey road—Annette road, and others—will suffer increased noise, as will the roads immediately surrounding the plant in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury.

Expensive works are also proposed involving the building of a new railway on existing track bed north of the Holloway road to link with the main line nearer to Finsbury park. A new bridge is to be constructed over the Hornsey road and the Holloway road, using bridge buttresses, which remain although the bridges were demolished years ago by British Rail. It seems short-sighted to demolish a bridge and subsequently have to rebuild it at considerable cost.

The designs and drawings in the environmental statement are misleading. My intervention in the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury may have been misunderstood. I was trying to say that the drawings pretended to show that there was not much difference in design between the existing bridge and the proposed new bridge span, whereas the result will be an ugly bridge span built at considerable cost which will cause great disruption during its construction. With the amount of money involved, and the kind of construction methods available, I should have thought that BR would at least recognise that it could do something better and more imaginative.

Perhaps the hon. Member for Keighley will be able to help me on my next point when he replies to the debate. At the moment there are many small industrial premises under the arches of the line to the north of the Holloway road around Hornsey road. I know many of the people who work in them and operate small businesses from them. Some years ago there was an attempt massively to

[Mr. Corbyn]

increase rents, which would have put most of them out of business. But most have survived by a process of negotiation and campaigning—and in some cases rents have changed. I am not sure what effect there will be on these industrial operations during the construction. Will they be able to remain after the construction of the new line and bridge? They are important employers, and they provide opportunities for small businesses to operate in the area.

Once again we are examining a Bill to do with King's Cross, even though we have been through lengthy processes of a similar sort in the past two Parliaments. Many of us have been unhappy about the planning procedures and the costs involved, not to mention the time taken up. British Rail has always tried to pretend that every obstacle put in the way of its grand design for King's Cross is a deliberate attempt to destroy the whole initiative.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury rightly concluded by saying that there is a world of difference between the construction of the King's Cross terminals and the location of the concrete batching plant. The proposals in the Bill are wholly unreasonable. If British Rail puts this plant in a wrong area such as ours, it will create dust and noise, it will increase traffic in the area and it will greatly damage the environment and health of local people.

We who live in inner cities do so because we want to —because we like them. That does not mean that we like the noise and pollution that go with them. It is not right or fair that plants such as this should be put on inappropriate sites, to the detriment of the environment. The many people from the community who gave evidence to both the Monnery road and Lough road inquiries conclusively showed their concern and their determination to improve their neighbourhoods.

This evening hon. Members will have heard what we who represent the borough have to say and I hope that they will recognise that our points are valid. British Rail has not made the case for locating the concrete plant where it wants it. The Bill should proceed no further. There should be a serious examination of the need to move the plant; of alternative sites for the plant; and of the adequacy of the site proposed, with its attendant dust and noise problems. Finally, we should also look into the likely requirement in future for ready-mixed concrete. Unfortunately there is a slump in the construction industry. London is blessed with a 25 per cent. surplus of office space which is likely to worsen if more office building goes ahead. I am sad to say that there is no major house building exercise because local authorities are denied the funds with which to undertake one.

One wonders whom the whole enterprise is designed to serve. Instead of a concrete batching plant on the site we should like something more useful in line with what local residents have suggested. Perhaps efforts should be made to solve the appalling housing problem faced by people in our borough and throughout inner London. The site was originally earmarked for housing and that is what it should be used for. That would go some way to providing decent housing for people who are homeless or sleeping on the streets, for the concealed homeless who have to share with others, and for those who live with small children on the top floors of tower blocks. They deserve a better chance in life, and this is a small opportunity to improve the lot of a few people.

By contrast, the option represented by the Bill would damage the lives of a large number of people, which is why I ask the House to reject it.

9.22 pm

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): I should like to take this brief opportunity to outline the Government's view of the Bill and to acknowledge the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), whose opening remarks admirably set the scene for the debate and whose subsequent interventions showed his mastery of his brief.

It would be churlish of me not to acknowledge also the conscientious, as ever, defence of constituency interests mounted by my hon. Friend—if I may so call him—the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and by his colleague the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). I noted too a number of pertinent interventions by my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown). Perhaps he will catch the Chair's eye at some future point and say more. I also acknowledge the contribution of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), whose interventions were as constructive and helpful as ever. I hope that that does not damage the hon. Gentleman's reputation any more than is reasonable, although, at this time of night, it is probably not too dangerous a compliment to pay him.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley has explained, the works in the Bill are related to those in the King's Cross Railways Bill which is currently before a Select Committee in another place. The Government reaffirmed in the Second Reading debate on 1 June their belief that King's Cross is the best location for the London terminus of the proposed rail link. We believe that King's Cross would be the most efficient interchange for international passengers seeking to travel on beyond London and for domestic passengers seeking to travel to central London.

Given that the works form a necessary part of the project which has already been endorsed by the House and passed to another place for consideration, it seems only equitable and sensible that the Bill should be allowed to proceed to Select Committee stage for detailed consideration.

Mr. Chris Smith *rose*——

Mr. Norris: Before the hon. Gentleman intervenes, perhaps he will allow me to suggest that a number of the detailed points that he raised might be more appropriately considered in the Bill's later stages.

Mr. Smith: The Minister said that the works in the Bill were "a necessary part" of the King's Cross project. They are nothing of the sort. Some of the works, such as the access points, are related to the main project, but the concrete batching plant and the railway link to it have nothing whatsoever to do with the main King's Cross project. I hope that the Minister will acknowledge that.

Mr. Norris: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says about the inevitability or otherwise of the link between the two Bills. I reaffirm the Government's view that the works in the No. 2 Bill form a necessary part of the project. I note

in passing that, although my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State granted permission for the plant following appeal, and although as such it does not fall within the private Bill procedure, a Bill is required for the railway lines that will enable the project to be joined to the east coast main line and thus allow the concrete to be transported by rail rather than by road. No doubt the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury would broadly welcome that, subject to the reservations that he has outlined.

It is not my place or that of the Government on occasions such as this to argue the merits or demerits of the Bill. I simply intervene to suggest the Government's overall attitude to the Bill. As I said earlier, it is clearly appropriate that the detailed points raised by the hon. Members who have contributed to our debate should be raised in later stages with the Committee. I therefore commend the Bill to the House, and ask that it be allowed to proceed in the usual way to Committee for more detailed consideration.

9.28 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): As the Minister has just explained, the Government and the Opposition do not officially take a position on legislation such as this. I have listened to the debate on the King's Cross Railways (No. 2) Bill and I have listened to the debates on earlier King's Cross Railways Bills. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on his detailed knowledge and constructive arguments against the proposal. I cannot really congratulate him on his brevity, because I am sure that irony is not permitted under the rules of the House. However, my hon. Friend made some detailed objections on behalf of the people he represents, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn).

The long technical summary provided by British Rail points out that the two concrete batching plants——

Mr. Michael Brown *rose*——

Mr. Snape: I will refer to the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) in a moment, because I want to break the habit of a lifetime and comment on a speech before I have heard it. If the hon. Gentleman will contain himself for a moment, I will get round to him.

The non-technical summary refers to the two concrete batching plants to be displaced by the King's Cross Railways Bill works. That appears to me to provide some justification for the label "King's Cross Railways (No. 2) Bill" to be attached to the measure, but I do not suppose that I will convince either of my hon. Friends that such is the case.

I was interested to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury point out an alternative site for the batching plant south of the river. There was one advantage and one disadvantage to that alternative. The advantage from my hon. Friend's point of view is that the site at New Cross was not in his constituency. The disadvantage is that siting the concrete batching plant south of the river would generate even more heavy goods vehicle movements in the City of London and around this building, too. I do not say that our environment is more worthy of protection than that of my hon. Friends' constituents, but if we are to fulfil our party's objective of ensuring that as much traffic as possible, particularly heavy freight traffic, is carried by rail, we must accept that meeting that objective is likely to cause some dislocation to the lives of many of our constituents.

The argument about the dislocation to lives caused by railway marshalling yards and railway facilities is not unfamiliar. I remind my hon. Friends that bordering my constituency, a seat that is slightly more marginal than those of my two hon. Friends, is the Bescot marshalling yard. Proposals to expand the railway facilities there meet considerable local opposition. It might underline my hon. Friends' view of my foolhardiness when I say that I have always supported such proposals because I believe that our party's objective of moving traffic from road to rail should not only be shared in someone else's constituency but adopted in our own constituencies.

Although I appreciate my hon. Friends' concern on behalf of their constituents, some of us who represent constituencies in the midlands and in the north of England would be glad of the opportunity to complain about the noise from industrial premises. Industrial premises in our constituencies are all too often deserted and derelict. The fact that the placing of industrial premises in constituencies such as Islington, South and Finsbury causes some local concern, which is rightly reflected in my hon. Friends' contributions, should not alter the fact that some of us would welcome facing the sort of problems about which my hon. Friends have complained.

I now refer, before he has even opened his mouth to make it, to the speech of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes. The hon. Gentleman has the Adjournment debate tonight. *[Interruption.]* If he has not noticed, I am sure that he will have it drawn to his attention. I promise not to stay for it, if that is any consolation. However, the hon. Gentleman has the Adjournment debate on the InterCity service to and from Cleethorpes. I understand his natural concern that British Rail should see fit to withdraw the one through train a day to that part of the world.

We faced a similar problem with InterCity services from Wolverhampton to Shrewsbury. The hon. Gentleman will be aware, because he takes an interest in such matters countrywide, that the InterCity service from Wolverhampton to Shrewsbury has been cut because BR says, as it says about the Cleethorpes service, that it does not pay and that InterCity is charged with running a profitable service. In the words of the former chairman of British Rail, Sir Bob Reid mark I, "Our job is to run a service which is profitable, not one that is desirable." The hon. Gentleman does not share that view in respect of his own constituency and regional interest.

I notice that BR has said that the objectives that were set by the Secretary of State for InterCity services in the United Kingdom have been considerably tightened of late. In 1988, the objective was to achieve a 2·7 per cent. rate of return on assets. InterCity achieved a 1·3 per cent. rate of return in 1988-89—a profit of £26 million.

In 1992-93, the objective is 4·75 per cent. rate of return —a profit of £95 million—despite the recession. I look forward to seeing the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes participate in all rail debates in future attacking his own Secretary of State, refusing to support his Government and giving the Government Whip nightmares. I hope that he will pass up any opportunity of

[Mr. Snape]

promotion to attack the objectives that his Government have set, which have a severe impact on the InterCity service to his constituency.

The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes cannot have it both ways. Either he supports the tightening of the financial belt on InterCity, and in doing so accepts that on any measure of profitability the one through-train to Cleethorpes, desirable as it might be, is a non-starter——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It may or may not be desirable, but that is for the Adjournment debate. Will the hon. Gentleman return to the King's Cross Railways (No. 2) Bill?

Mr. Snape: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have said enough, and I am grateful to you for your guidance and for your kindness in allowing me to say what I have said already. Now that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes knows what is in order and what is not, I know that he will be careful to avoid falling foul of your justified strictures.

I shall vote for the Bill, even though I appreciate the difficulty that it causes some of my hon. Friends. I believe that the objectives inherent in the Bill are ones that Opposition Members should support.

9.36 pm

Mr. John Heppell (Nottingham, East): When I was elected to Parliament, I thought that I would get away from planning matters, and I breathed a sigh of relief. But I have been thrown back among planning matters again. However, there is a great difference. I could have started off like the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) by expressing my disappointment that British Rail's proposals do not contain a stop for Nottingham to provide a through route via King's Cross to the channel tunnel. I am disappointed about that because I recognise that the channel tunnel will bring extra prosperity to Britain and that the prosperity will follow the lines of communication. The prosperity will come to where the railway runs, so I am disappointed that Nottingham is not part of that line.

If the Bill fails, Nottingham will certainly never have a link with the channel tunnel. If the Bill is passed, there is a possibility that Nottingham will have that link. I believe that if the No. 2 Bill fails, the first Bill will fail. Nothing that my hon. Friends the Members for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) or for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) have said persuades me otherwise.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury says that 95 per cent. of the Bill has nothing to do with the original King's Cross Railways Bill. I accept that. My problem is: what about the 5 per cent. that has something to do with the original Bill? If 5, 4, 3, 2 or 1 per cent. is necessary for the Bill to be passed, I have a duty to support the No. 2 Bill.

I understand the fears of my hon. Friends the Members for Islington, North and for Islington, South and Finsbury. They made a valiant attempt to defend their constituents. They somewhat gilded the lilly. They used some ingenious arguments. If I had more time—I recognise the pressure of time, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I could pick apart their arguments. There was an element of "not in my backyard" in their arguments, but I recognise that there are genuine fears among their constituents. My hon. Friends should express those fears. They have every right to do so.

I represent Nottingham. The area that I represent, Nottingham, East, has some of the worst unemployment figures and some of the worst bankruptcy rates in the country. One of my wards has 40 per cent. Overall unemployment and male unemployment is much higher.

I recognise the unemployment problems faced by the hon. Member for Islington, North, but I cannot return to Nottingham, East and tell people that I have thrown away a chance to give them extra prosperity because of what is happening in Islington.

If I vote against the Bill and it falls, the King's Cross Railways Bill will fall, and then we shall effectively strengthen the north-south divide. In Nottingham, we would like a share of channel tunnel prosperity. Why should that stop at London and the south-east? My views will be those expressed by the majority of hon. Members in the north and in the midlands.

9.40 pm

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): Some of my comments will be similar to those made by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell). I listened with considerable interest to my hon. Friends the Members for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), who put up a spirited defence of what they think of as their constituents' interests. I was interested to find that my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury participated in the planning process, at the end of which the planning inspector arrived at a conclusion. Had he come to a different conclusion, I imagine that the Bill before us would have been different.

My hon. Friend drew attention to the fact that for several years I have commented, outside the House, on the channel tunnel and direct links between it and the north of England. Those links depend critically on a King's Cross terminal. Therefore, in the past eight years—not merely during the four years that the matter has been before the House—I have been active in trying to ensure that those links are in place and have supported the King's Cross project.

I accept that my interest is in one sense strategic. I am interested in the strategic issues through which we may ensure that the channel tunnel serves the nation and not merely the south-east, and that it provides connections between the single European market and the northern industrial regions.

While my hon. Friends who represent Islington have to consider the needs of the people there, and especially of those people near the site where the concrete plant is to be relocated, I have campaigned on behalf of the northern region, and have been dealing with the needs of 17 million people and with the economy that affects them. I must set that and its 5 per cent. of the Bill against the 95 per cent. of the Bill that my hon. Friends who represent Islington are talking about.

Mr. Chris Smith: I have followed what my hon. Friend has said and also the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell). Their arguments depend entirely on a presumption that, if the access points included within the Bill for the main King's Cross site are not given the go-ahead, the site, the project

and thereby the link to Nottingham, Leeds and the north cannot proceed. That is an incorrect assumption. Access points in the King's Cross Railways Bill provide perfectly well for access to the site. This Bill is an attempt to improve access and is not essential for the rest of the project to go ahead.

Mr. Gunnell: I am also worried about the time scale involved in the realisation of the King's Cross project. Improved access points appear to me to affect the time scale. One of my concerns has been the way in which the timing of the project has slipped back further and further. Therefore, there is no value in delaying the Second Reading.

The objections raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Islington, South and Finsbury and for Islington, North should be discussed. But they were considered by the planning inquiry and conclusions were reached. The best place for such arguments to be considered here is in Committee, when the 16 petitions that have been received can be examined in detail. The residents who live near to the plant, who submitted those petitions, would then be able to express their anxieties to hon. Members. There is no reason for further delay, because the north needs the transport links to be in place as soon as possible after the tunnel is completed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) raised a different objection. He was dissatisfied with British Rail's plans for the use of the line and its provision of service to the tunnel. He will know that I am equally dissatisfied with the proposals that British Rail has produced after many years of lobbying. British Rail's planned services are not adequate for any of the northern regions, and in particular Yorkshire and Humberside. It will provide no service at all to west Yorkshire. I agree with my hon. Friend that the proposed links are highly unsatisfactory, but that does not mean that we should stop the Bill's progress at this point.

I shall continue to argue with British Rail about the development of the line and the provision of the correct rolling stock. But we will not even need that rolling stock if the right links are not in place.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend agree that if we do not argue but accept everything that British Rail proposes, it will run right over us without giving us any concessions at all? In the negotiations, it is important that we hold some cards on our side.

Mr. Gunnell: I have talked to British Rail, to Bob Reid version one and Bob Reid version two, and a whole host of people about the King's Cross development. We must resist British Rail's attempts to put a block on the provision of services to the north. However, there is a difference between arguing for greater investment by British Rail and taking steps which will lead to unreasonable delays in the King's Cross project. The project has enough problems already.

British Rail's future is surrounded by uncertainty. This project will cost at least £1·4 billion, and if that sum must be obtained primarily from the private sector, which is the present view, I worry whether the project will obtain the money and be completed in the time scale that the north of England needs. The project should be completed. Money should be provided from public funds because it is a national responsibility to ensure that national links are in place for the channel tunnel.

If we are to allow the project to have the maximum chance to succeed, we must ensure that the Bill goes to Committee stage so that hon. Member's objections can be considered in detail.

9.48 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I take issue with the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell). We have both represented our local authority in one guise or another. Before he entered the House, the hon. Gentleman was a distinguished member of the local authority and, subsequently, an active director of the Yorkshire and Humberside development association. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman may wonder why I take issue with him, because he may argue that, to some extent, our interests are the same.

I have long been uneasy about the King's Cross development. When the original Bill came before the House in 1988, I had misgivings.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) took issue with me on whether the project should be dealt with by public inquiry or private Bill. I make no apology for saying that I accept that the private Bill procedure is the correct way for such a project to come before the House. In the 13 years in which I have been a Member of this House, I have taken a close interest in private Bills. I have opposed and promoted them, and I must therefore take the rough with the smooth. Private Bills give hon. Members an opportunity to probe organisations like British Rail much more closely.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury is right to discuss his grave misgivings about the project. Hon. Members may ask what someone representing Brigg and Cleethorpes knows about King's Cross. For the past 22 years, since I first went to York university, I have been travelling from King's Cross to York, Scunthorpe or Cleethorpes by rail and I have spent more hours than I care to remember standing on the platforms at King's Cross waiting for a train to one of those three destinations. I hope that I shall have many opportunities in the future to stand on that platform waiting for the 7.50 train. Although the train is often delayed and I am stuck there for an hour or two, it will eventually get me all the way to Cleethorpes. I know a lot about King's Cross because the train is often delayed for more than an hour and I take the opportunity to go round the area.

I am particularly familiar with the Golden Lion public house. My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) said that he thinks that British Rail will be able to accommodate the problems with regard to that pub, but I am not sure that that is true. The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) quoted only from the non-technical report, whereas those of us who take a close interest in the Bill have referred throughout the debate to the technical report. In that report, British Rail makes it clear that the public house will have to be destroyed. I am delighted to hear from my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley that that has now been changed.

However, whether British Rail comes to the House with private legislation or whether it makes assurances in correspondence, it says one thing one year and then stands on its head and swears blindly that it did not mean it. I shall not share my correspondence with the House now but I shall do so in a couple of hours. When I told British Rail in 1988 that I would oppose the original King's Cross

[Mr. Michael Brown]

Bill unless I received certain assurances, I was given those assurances on paper. But today, British Rail will say that the position has changed. Its assurances are not worth the paper on which they are written——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): They are like party political manifestos.

Mr. Brown: That comment is rather near the mark.

British Rail will say anything to get us into the Division Lobbies on private legislation. I have correspondence between myself and British Rail dating back to 1988, when the original King's Cross Bill was introduced, seeking assurances before I was prepared to support the Bill. Today, those assurances are not worth the paper on which they were written.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley assures hon. Members that they need not worry about the Golden Lion public house because, although the technical report says that it will be destroyed, that is not so, I prefer to rely on the judgment of one of the petitioners, the Camden Civic Society, which has existed for a long time. It is described in its petition as a local amenity society, founded in 1963, and is affiliated to the Civic Trust. It has been dealing with British Rail over King's Cross for a long time —more than 28 years. It has met regularly with British Rail and played an active part in monitoring planning developments in the district around King's Cross, particularly in heightening public awareness of its buildings and environment.

In 1988, when the original King's Cross Bill was introduced, Camden Civic Society took the initiative, with officers of the London borough of Camden, in establishing a conservation area advisory committee for the King's Cross district, on the lines set out in the Department of the Environment circular produced in August 1987.

The organisation has met regularly since then and has played an important role in discussions on the district's future. It had no hesitation in saying that the Bill would require the destruction of the Golden Lion public house. It says that the pub is a distinctive building. I have frequently visited the pub when I have been at a loose end waiting for a British Rail train to take me to Cleethorpes, and I agree. I believe that it is also an attractive building in the context of an inner-city environment. It is part of the character of what Camden Civic Society describes as the King's Cross conservation area.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury mentioned another building, but I think that he could have done it more justice. The Bill's proposals would involve demolishing the St. Pancras ironworks building—situated at 36-40 York way—which could otherwise be preserved. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury is right to say that there is an alternative.

I have been brought up on the lexicon that there is no alternative with regard to other political matters, but when it came to the issue of nuclear waste in Brigg and Cleethorpes, I proved that there was an alternative. The hon. Gentleman can take heart from the fact that I was told that there was no alternative but to have nuclear waste in my constituency as there was nowhere else for it to go. But miraculously, just one week before the 1987 general election was called, the proposal disappeared.

It is absolutely vital that hon. Members should be wary when an organisation such as British Rail seeks powers and claims that the project at King's Cross will fall unless there is a concrete batching plant at Lough road. They must be cautious if British Rail says that the King's Cross project for links between the north of England and Nottingham, through to the channel tunnel, will fall apart if the three temporary access points proposed in the Bill are not granted.

Hon. Members are being made fools of, and taken for a ride by British Rail, if they believe that in two or three years time when they have a constituency problem involving British Rail, they can remind it that they supported it over a controversial Bill and expect it to give them similar support. They can forget that idea—I went through that experience four years ago. I know exactly what hon. Members are in for if they believe the assurances given them by British Rail.

Mr. Waller *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 169, Noes 40.

Division No. 35] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Eggar, Tim
Aitken, Jonathan	Elletson, Harold
Arbuthnot, James	Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*	Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*	Evennett, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Faber, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*	Fabricant, Michael
Bates, Michael	Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Bayley, Hugh	Fenner, Dame Peggy
Beggs, Roy	Fishburn, John Dudley
Bellingham, Henry	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Beresford, Sir Paul	Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.	Forth, Eric
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Booth, Hartley	Freeman, Roger
Boswell, Tim	Gardiner, Sir George
Bowis, John	Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Brandreth, Gyles	Gorst, John
Brazier, Julian	Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Bright, Graham	Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela	Gunnell, John
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Hague, William
Burt, Alistair	Hargreaves, Andrew
Butcher, John	Harris, David
Butler, Peter	Haselhurst, Alan
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Hawkins, Nicholas
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Hawksley, Warren
Carrington, Matthew	Hayes, Jerry
Cash, William	Heald, Oliver
Chaplin, Mrs Judith	Heathcoat-Amory, David
Chapman, Sydney	Hendry, Charles
Clappison, James	Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*	Hinchliffe, David
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*	Horam, John
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey	Hoyle, Doug
Colvin, Michael	Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Congdon, David	Hunter, Andrew
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*	Jack, Michael
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John	Jenkin, Bernard
Couchman, James	Jessel, Toby
Cran, James	Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*	Kilfedder, Sir James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*	Kirkhope, Timothy
Day, Stephen	Knapman, Roger
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James	Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Dover, Den	Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Duncan, Alan	Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Durant, Sir Anthony	Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*

Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lewis, Terry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCartney, Ian
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mahon, Alice
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Riddick, Graham
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilson, Brian
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Luff and
Dr. Robert Spink.

NOES

Ainger, Nicholas
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Bennett, Andrew F.
Bradley, Keith
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Callaghan, Jim
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Cryer, Bob
Dafis, Cynog
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian
Dowd, Jim
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Hardy, Peter
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'rdshire)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Loyden, Eddie
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Meale, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morley, Elliot
Mullin, Chris
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Rogers, Allan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Stern, Michael
Vaz, Keith
Wareing, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and
Mr. Malcolm Chisholm.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Question put and agreed to.
Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed.

BANKRUPTCY (SCOTLAND) BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—
Resolved,

That for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill, it is expedient to authorise

1. the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—
   (a) any fees paid by the Accountant in Bankruptcy under section 1B(4) of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985;
   (b) any administrative expenses incurred by the Secretary of State;
   (c) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act, and

2. the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any fees received by the Accountant in Bankruptcy in pursuance of regulations made under section 69A of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Armed Forces (Discipline)

10.10 pm

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): I beg to move,

That the draft Army, Air Force and Naval Discipline Acts (Continuation) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 2nd June, be approved.

The purpose of the order is to continue in force for a further year the Army and Air Force Acts 1955 and the Naval Discipline Act 1957, which together provide the statutory basis for discipline in the three services.

The House will be aware that it is a long-established practice for service discipline to be fully reviewed every five years by means of the consideration of an Armed Forces Bill and for the disciplinary code as then enacted to be reviewed annually in the intervening years by an order in council which is itself approved by resolution of each House—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is an important debate, and we are hearing an important statement from the Minister. It would be helpful if hon. Members who do not intend to remain left the Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I ask hon. Members at the Bar of the House to retire quietly.

Mr. Aitken: The House will also be aware that an Armed Forces Bill was considered and duly enacted in 1991. That Act continued the three service discipline Acts until 31 August 1992 and endorsed the process of annual continuation thereafter by order in council. I am therefore asking the House tonight to give its annual renewal to the discipline Acts by approving the order.

After that brief introduction, it would on a routine occasion be appropriate for me to resume my seat and listen to the comments of hon. Members who wish to debate the order. However, this year this debate provides a useful parliamentary opportunity for the Government to respond to the principal recommendations of the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill, whose report was published last April.

First, let me thank the hon. Members who sat on that Select Committee for presenting to the House such a thoughtful report on various military disciplinary matters. After giving careful consideration to the Committee's recommendations I can tell the House that the Government intend to respond constructively and positively in the following specific ways.

The most controversial issue discussed in the report was that of homosexuality in the armed forces. After taking evidence from many quarters, the Select Committee upheld and accepted the Ministry of Defence's long-established policy that homosexual activity is incompatible with service in the armed forces. Indeed, in its report, the Committee acknowledged that the armed forces should not be required to accept homosexuals. However, the Committee did recommend that homosexual activity of a kind that is legal in civilian law should no longer constitute an offence under service law. That recommendation has been considered very carefully by the service personnel authorities, and they and Ministers have concluded that the Select Committee's recommendation should be accepted.

I think that the House will require a careful explanation of the effects of this decision. The Sexual Offences Act 1967 provides that homosexual acts undertaken in private between two consenting males over the age of 21 shall not be criminal offences. That Act, however, did not extend to members of the armed forces. It has therefore remained possible, though rare, for legal proceedings to be taken against service men and women for homosexual acts that are not criminal offences in civilian law.

It is now the Government's view, following the advice of the Select Committee, that such criminal proceedings should no longer be brought. My Department has therefore accepted that the special provisions of section 1(5) of the Sexual Offences Act 1967 should not apply in future. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has been asked to implement the repeal of this part of the Act as soon as the legislative programme allows.

I should like to make it clear that this is a sensible measure of decriminalisation, whose purpose is to tidy up the differences between military and civilian law. It is not intended to alter the present disciplinary climate of service life.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I am grateful to the Under-Secretary for making this statement. We have been asking for some time for such a statement to be made. On the issue of decriminalising homosexual activity in the armed forces, are the people who are involved in such activities liable to be charged under other aspects of Army law?

Mr. Aitken: No, unless they have committed offences that might also be offences under service law, such as coercion. However, the conduct of consenting adults in private will not be an offence under the disciplinary code.

Mr. Rogers: If two consenting adult soldiers or members of the women's forces together participate in such an act, am I right in thinking that they will not be charged with conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline, the usual catch-all phrase that is used? I remind the Minister that not for some time has anybody in the armed forces been charged with a criminal offence. A person has been charged either on administrative grounds or by use of the catch-all phrase, conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline.

Mr. Aitken: The offence, which is technically a criminal offence under service law, is being decriminalised. I shall deal in a moment with discharges for administrative reasons. If a service man or service woman had committed an act that was a criminal offence in civilian life or that constituted a breach of service discipline—I mentioned the offence of coercion—that would be applicable to any sexual relationship, whether homosexual or heterosexual, a service prosecution would still be possible.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Does not the point that the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) made need further elucidation? I understand the Minister to be saying that a homosexual act between consenting adults in the forces will now be treated on the same basis as if it had occurred outside the forces. However, the hon. Gentleman asked whether that same act might be struck at by some other disciplinary provision under the criminal law, in so far as it applies to the armed forces.

Mr. Aitken: I was coming to the question of discharges. It remains the policy of the Ministry of Defence not to accept homosexual activity within the armed forces. Service personnel who are involved in homosexual activity will, as at present, be administratively discharged, whether or not any criminal offence has taken place.

I hope that the House recognises that, although we have moved in the direction of decriminalisation, as recommended by the Select Committee, we have not moved away from the standards of personal conduct required of all those who serve in the special circumstances of the armed forces.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): The step that the Minister has announced is a small but brave one in the right direction. However, I hope that he will accept that many of us want the Government to go further to ensure that ultimately the standards of conduct that we accept in civilian life are precisely those that are applied to military life.

Mr. Aitken: This would not be the House of Commons if that opinion were not expressed in it. Of course, I am aware of that view, but I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, in coming to these decisions, any Minister feels like the over-advised centurion in Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome", when

"those behind cried 'Forward! And those before cried 'Back!'"

There are different views on the issue.

I emphasise that homosexual activity remains incompatible with military service, and that those who engage in it must be expected to be discharged. However, in future, individuals who engage in homosexual activity that is legal in civilian law will not be prosecuted under service law and they will have no criminal record or entry on the police computer.

Mr. Rogers: I am grateful to the Minister, but we must have elucidation on that point. If he is saying that there is to be no change in the law, we must accept it. However, in a similar debate last year, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces said:

"Our practice is that the majority of service personnel who are required to leave the services on grounds of their homosexuality are adminstratively discharged . . . Therefore, there is no question of such people having a criminal record on account of their homosexuality."

The Government are now saying that they are decriminalising homosexuality per se in the armed forces but that in practice there will be no change in their attitude. Earlier in the same debate, the Minister of State said:

"It is a long-standing policy that both homosexual activity and orientation are incompatible with service in the armed forces."—[*Official Report*, 17 June 1991; Vol. 193, c. 115-16.]

Are the Government sticking to that statement?

Mr. Aitken: Yes, the Government are sticking to that statement, but I think that the hon. Gentleman is being a little churlish in suggesting that there has been no change. It is true that the administrative practices in a great many cases will remain the same but, at the same time, the Select Committee found that there had been approximately 39 cases in the past four years of those who had been found to be indulging in homosexual activities who had been prosecuted. Those people at least will in future no longer have the problems of a criminal prosecution and criminal record, so to say that there has been no change is not fair. An important principle has been changed and there has been change in some practical cases.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I welcome the step announced by my hon. Friend, because it is fair and will achieve a measure of justice in bringing together the civil and service laws. Nevertheless, does he understand that there is a need to go further and to consider the problems that some people will have if they lose their service job and wish to return to civilian life with a black mark on their record which would not be there had they conducted themselves in the same way in civilian life? In other words, someone whose activity in the services would be permissible in the Ministry of Defence could be disadvantaged at a later date, so that is perhaps the next step that my hon. Friend could investigate.

Mr. Aitken: We shall consider that point, but it is fair to say that in the overwhelming majority of cases there is no question of a black mark being obviously on the record. In evidence given to the Select Committee, one major general said that the type of report written in such cases was at pains not to disclose the fact that there had been any difficulties leading to the administrative discharge, although someone investigating further could come across such information if he dug deeply into the records.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On the point raised by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), will the Minister confirm that such a person discharged from the forces would not be dismissed with ignominy?

Mr. Aitken: I think that "with ignominy" is the wrong term because the usual literal term is "service no longer required", which could have many interpretations and ignominy would not necessarily be one of them.

It would be unfair to judge that that led to some obvious black mark or ignominious stain.

Mr. Tony Banks: May I ask the Minister a question which was asked earlier? Why do the Government consider that homosexuality is incompatible with service life?

Mr. Aitken: When one accepts service under the Crown in the armed forces, one also accepts that there are special responsibilities and special conditions. One set of those conditions is that one is not living totally in private but often in crowded barracks and under conditions of some stress. In those conditions, homosexual activities can cause difficulties to the community, and can have insidious effects on discipline, so they cannot be accepted as they can in civilian life.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), I warmly welcome the announcement, but my hon. Friend the Minister has already recognised the difficulties caused by his failure to go one step further. The reasons which he has just given are precisely those which used to be deployed to justify keeping women out of the armed forces. Women are now in the armed forces, and most of them perform brilliantly. They add a great deal to the services and are good or bad soldiers according to their qualities, not according to their sexual orientation.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Does my hon. Friend accept that in the American armed forces, which have gone even further than we and have integrated women into combat units, elaborate and sometimes expensive measures are taken—for example, in the organisation and layout of barracks—to prevent the sort of problems that he has described arising between men and women, in terms of the pressures that can build up? If we were to make such arrangements to separate homosexuals, Opposition Members would be the first to make an outcry.

Mr. Aitken: I have had enough trouble getting through this subject in Britain, without having to examine what goes on in American barracks as well. My hon. Friend is right to say that there are some special strains and stresses of service life, whether in the American armed forces or in our own.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) has over-simplified the problem to some extent. But as she has intervened, I shall pay a genuine tribute not only to her but to several other hon. Members —my hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) and for Harlow (Mr. Hayes)—who have assiduously campaigned for changes in the law on this issue. They should take some satisfaction in the fact that a step forward has been taken in the direction that they would wish, although we may not have gone as far as all of them would have wanted.

Another important recommendation of the Select Committee concerned ethnic monitoring and racial harassment, referred to in paragraphs 34 and 35 of the report. The Committee made two recommendations about the position of members of ethnic minorities who join the armed forces. It said:

> "We recommend that the MOD consider how best to identify incidents of racial harassment in the armed forces and keep records accordingly, and we recommend that the MOD reconsider its opposition to ethnic monitoring of service personnel."

On the latter point, I am pleased to reiterate the announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces on 14 May that we shall extend to serving personnel our present practice of monitoring the ethnic origin of applicants to the three services.

On racial harassment, I remind the House that it is a clear and unequivocal policy within the armed forces that no form of racial discrimination is tolerated. Any complaint by a service man or woman of harassment or discrimination will be fully investigated under the redress of grievance procedures laid down in the service discipline Acts.

When considering record keeping, the Select Committee expressed concern about racial harassment as a form of bullying and recognised the difficulty in identifying cases in which race was the determining factor. There is no specific offence of bullying, racial harassment or racial abuse under the service discipline Acts. Such offences would be dealt with under other provisions, such as those involving conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline, or common assault.

Currently, only the Army records centrally all complaints of assault and other ill treatment. It also records separately complaints of racially motivated ill treatment. The Navy and RAF do not maintain central records of all complaints of bullying and other ill treatment, but will do so with effect from 1 September and 1 August this year respectively. I need hardly say that bullying in itself is also regarded as a very serious matter and it has been made clear throughout the services that bullying and ill treatment will not be tolerated. I can report that the number of cases of bullying appears to have fallen significantly in recent years.

The Select Committe made a number of other specific recommendations which are being carefully considered within my Department.

The Committee expressed the view that there should be a presumption that under-18-year-olds should not be sent on active service overseas, unless there was an overriding requirement for their skills or the threat to national security was sufficient to warrant the conscription of minors. The services believe that their deployment of under-18s is broadly consistent with the Select Committee's view, but the matter remains under consideration.

The Committee also recommended that the Ministry of Defence examine the terms of enlistment for under-18-year-olds and bring forward proposals for change within 12 months. I can assure the House that this recommendation is also being carefully and sympathetically considered.

The Select Committee also commented on the future of the Royal Navy detention centre and recommended that a timetable be announced for the closure of the RN detention quarters at Portmouth, and the redeployment of those facilities to the military corrective training centre —MCTC—at Colchester. A rigorous investment appraisal is being undertaken to determine the benefits and costs of such a step. The appraisal will be completed by the end of July. I ask the House to note that a decision in favour of transfer of facilities to the MCTC would necessitate further building work at Colchester, and that the time scale involved would mean continued use of the RN detention quarters into 1994-95.

The Committee also made recommendations regarding the services' sentencing policy to ensure equality of sentencing between men and women. This followed a visit to MCTC, where detention facilities for women are now available. I can assure the House that it has always been the intention of the armed forces to follow an equal sentencing policy, and the provision of specific detention facilities for women gives added practical effect to this policy. Action is in hand to amend the necessary regulations.

The Select Committee acknowledged the considerable changes which had taken place in the employment of service women since the previous Armed Forces Bill. It noted, however, that there were different minimum ages of enlistment for men and women—16 for men and 17 for women—and recommended that the minimum ages of enlistment for women should be brought into line without further delay.

I am pleased to tell the House that the Navy brought the minimum age of enlistment for women into line with that for men last October and that in September this year the Army will introduce a common enlistment age of 16½ for both men and women. The RAF is currently considering a common age of enlistment for both men and women. This change is in line with our policy of aligning men and women's terms and conditions of service where practicable.

Finally, the Select Committee recommended that

"The Government provide parliamentary time in the next five years for legislation to consolidate service law".

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I ask the Minister a question of which I have given him all too brief notice? When may we expect a statement by the Ministry of Defence on the declassification of records in respect of those who may have been taken prisoner in the Korean war? I have told the Department of my personal concern about certain of my contemporaries. Is the Minister prepared to contact the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to ask for information? In the light of the astonishing statement by President Yeltsin in Washington yesterday, what representations are being made to the Russian Government to obtain information about any such British service men who may still be alive?

Mr. Aitken: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice of that question. I can give him some limited information. We did note President Yeltsin's remarkable statement; it has raised certain questions and possible lines of inquiry. We shall follow them up, and we will certainly take into account the hon. Gentleman's point about the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. About 100 service men were unaccounted for in Korea, and about 80 were missing in action but not thought to be prisoners of war. We are looking at all the cases where new information comes to light and we will follow up all leads and suggestions made to us by responsible sources.

Dr. Godman: Will the Minister confirm that the children of service families caught up in sexual or physical abuse cases will be given the same protection given to children in England and Wales in relation to the Criminal Justice Act 1987 and to children in Scotland in relation to the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990?

Mr. Aitken: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that I am only a Defence Minister. I am not qualified to comment on matters of Scottish law. However, I will endeavour to answer his question at the end of the debate if I am given the leave of the House to do so, or I will write to him later.

Before that intervention, I was referring to a legal matter about consolidation. I am pleased to tell the House that the Law Commission has already begun work on that task. It is a much-needed operation because, metaphorically speaking, the MOD seems to contain a veritable legal attic full of antiquated service law that needs tidying up or, in some cases, sweeping away. I was amused to discover that naval recruitment by the press gang is still legal under the royal prerogative and that at least 44 separate statutes need to be considered by the Law Commission, ranging from the Regimental Accounts Act 1908, the Seamen's and Soldiers' False Characters Act 1906 and the Colonial Naval Defence Act 1831.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): My hon. Friend may be aware that "arson" in the royal dockyards is still a capital offence.

Mr. Aitken: I am most grateful for that interesting information. However, I wonder whether my hon. and learned Friend's point has shown that there is a need for a House of Commons Discipline Act.

I hope that the House will feel that we have made a thorough and thoughtful response to the various recommendations of the Select Committee. There are additional points that I have not been able to cover because of the time available, but my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Armed Forces, for whom I am deputising this evening, will write to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House about them. If they are raised on the Floor of the House tonight, I will try to respond to them at the end of the debate.

I should like to conclude by reminding the House that, in their many different areas of operations, our services play an essential part in safeguarding our interests and freedoms. I pay tribute to their undoubted professionalism and dedication.

The high quality of our armed forces is due in no small part to their good morale and, in a military environment, to their fair and equitable system of discipline. It is essential to preserve that and to ensure that the high levels of efficiency and effectiveness that characterise the three services are maintained. That is what the Service discipline Acts seek to do, and I therefore invite the House to approve the order.

10.37 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I congratulate the Minister on his appointment as Minister of State for Defence Procurement and I recognise that he is deputising tonight for the Minister of State for the Armed Forces who is in the Falkland Islands. Fortunately, I managed to get out of that so we are both meeting tonight away from our respective disciplines in defence matters. I am sure that the Minister will give his all to his duties.

I am pleased that the Minister has discovered that the press gang is still legal. I noticed a distinct gleam in the eye of the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) when the Minister said that. I will refer later to the hon. Member for Canterbury because of his view in 1989 that we could solve the ethnic minority problem in the armed forces by having an all-black regiment. I do not suppose that that idea would receive much support from the Minister of State.

I want to pay tribute to our service men and women whose efficiency, skill and dedication are second to none and who continue to render great service to the country. Opposition Members have always supported our armed forces. We will not oppose the order because we recognise that a fair system of discipline is essential to the effectiveness and operation of our armed forces and that it is an essential framework in which they can exercise their skills and functions.

Breaches of discipline are relatively isolated, but, unfortunately, certain breaches of discipline occur regularly. Some of them form a pattern in many regiments, much to their shame. For instance, bullying was referred to by the Minister, not casually but in passing. Bullying in the armed forces takes place either formally often by way of brutal initiation ceremonies—which still exist, although, to their credit, the Government have tried to stamp them out—or informally, when individuals or groups take it on themselves systematically to terrorise their service comrades. Such incidents have occurred over the past year. My colleagues will refer to incidents in which some of their constituents have been involved.

Either type of bullying is absolutely indefensible. Besides being intrinsically wrong, it destroys morale and the well-being of units. Hon. Members who have served in

[Mr. Allan Rogers]

the armed forces realise how morale can be lowered as a result of groups of individuals bullying people who cannot look after themselves.

Successive Ministers have taken action. I pay tribute to the work of the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), who has been transferred to the Department of Transport. When the hon. Gentleman was Minister of State for the Armed Forces, he was most diligent in pursuing bullying, but still the problem exists. The problem will not be solved until the Government bring senior officers to book. It is no good bringing the perpetrators of bullying to book—it must be senior officers who command units. If they are not good enough to control sadistic behaviour in their regiments or units, they are not fit to command. Until the Government take strong action against senior officers, we shall always have endemic bullying in martial societies.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that one of the most endemic, sadistic and difficult methods of bullying in the armed forces is when one homosexual has a hold over another?

Mr. Rogers: I propose to deal with that intervention with almost the contempt that it deserves. It was a sweeping and silly statement. If the hon. and learned Member had talked in terms other than specifically about homosexuality, he might have had a point. I shall refer to the general issue of homosexuality. I urge the hon. and learned Gentleman to keep an open mind on the issue. It is complex. Homosexuality or heterosexual activity in the armed forces can, in certain circumstances, lead to breakdowns in discipline. That is equally true of an office, a factory, or the House of Commons, if we put the issue in a general working context, but I do not want to go any further down that line.

I was talking about bullying. Bullying takes on a special dimension when it occurs in the form of racial bigotry, discrimination and harassment. I welcome the Minister saying that he will set up the ethnic monitoring system to identify incidents and to keep records. I am not sure whether that goes far enough.

I believe that the Government deplore bigotry in our armed forces against coloured or black recruits. But they are not doing enough to combat it. It is all right to say, as Ministers have done in the past, that people should complain. The Minister of State for the Armed Forces said last year:

"We hear of people who have left the armed forces and say that they were discriminated against during their time in the armed forces. It would be much more useful if they complained at the time. If they did, such allegations would be investigated by senior officers, and there is no doubt that any form of bullying or racial discrimination or harassment would be seriously investigated and dealt with."—[*Official Report*, 17 June 1991; Vol. 193, c. 117.]

How can one expect the victims of attack, racial prejudice, bigotry and harassment to feel that they have any redress in their units when the people to whom they are likely to complain are the very persons who are responsible for the general system under which they operate and, indeed, might even tolerate forms of discrimination?

It is naive to say that, because a person does not complain at the time that he is bullied, beaten or discriminated against, he should not complain later. He operates in a system that induces an atmosphere of fear. Complaints, even after the event, ought to be treated in a sympathetic manner. Simply to say what the Minister of State for the Armed Forces said last year seems a simple cop-out.

Much more needs to be done and much more must be done. Incidentally, as I said earlier, we do not want any further daft suggestions that the way to solve the problems of ethnic minorities in the armed forces is to set up ethnic minority regiments. I have never heard anything more daft in my life.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): What about the Welsh Regiment?

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman says, "What about the Welsh Regiment?" That just shows his English bigotry. But we shall leave it at that for now. I certainly shall not get involved in that one.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: What about the Welsh rugby team?

Mr. Rogers: We do not lose every rugby match. We might do a little better next year. As a Scotsman, the hon. and learned Gentleman should be careful on that point.

The balance of ethnic minorities in the armed forces is not improving. I hope that the new Secretary of State will address that problem. It is odd that ethnic minority groups form about 5 per cent. of the total general population but provide only about 1 per cent. of armed forces recruits. To my mind, that is a waste of an excellent source of first-class recruits.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I suggest that the hon. Gentleman looks carefully at percentages when he suggests that certain people do not get their fair share. I do not know about the Welsh, but the Scots represent less than 9 per cent. of the United Kingdom population but provide far more than 9 per cent. of the strength of the armed forces. Therefore, it could be argued that the Scots enjoy more than double their fair share.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Largely because of unemployment.

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) says that that is largely because of unemployment. That may well be a measure. But what a silly statement the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) makes. He does a disservice by talking about the Welsh and Scots as ethnic minorities. We regard ourselves as fully integrated members of the United Kingdom, not as ethnic minorities in any sense. Peculiar we might be, strange we might be, but we are full citizens of the United Kingdom and have been for many hundreds of years.

When I say that harassment and bigotry are shown to ethnic minorities I refer to those people who, simply because of the colour of their skin, receive a bad time in the armed forces.

Mr. Bill Walker: Ah.

Mr. Rogers: If the hon. Gentleman says, "Ah," in that naive way, he ignores a serious problem.

The apparently intractable problem of recruiting more people from ethnic minorities to the armed forces requires more effort. That is why I am pleased about the setting up of a register and that there will be ethnic monitoring of applications, and of people accepted for the forces,

because the percentage of applicants from ethnic minorities accepted is less than the percentage of white applicants.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Brigade of Guards and the Household Regiments have a bad record when it comes to recruiting ethnic minorities? I do not think that there is a black officer in the Brigade of Guards.

Mr. Rogers: That is true. One only has to see the Brigade of Guards on parade up the road to see how it encourages members of ethnic minorities into its ranks. It is a shame and a blot on the British, when across the ocean in America a black man is the No. 1 soldier. We are still talking about pathetically low numbers in our armed forces.

An enormous amount of talent is out there to be used and I hope that the Minister and the Secretary of State will constructively consider our procedures for enrolling more people from ethnic minorities, as I have suggested.

I accept that the decriminalisation of homosexuality in the armed forces—an issue to which the Minister referred—is a step in the right direction. On the other hand, the Ministers' statement does not alter the fact that, if anyone engages in homosexual activity, they will be thrown out.

Mr. Bill Walker: Quite properly.

Mr. Rogers: That is a separate argument. I do not know whether that again demonstrates the bigotry of the hon. Member for Tayside, North.

In addition to issues that the Minister mentioned in general terms, being a lesbian or a gay is a ground for instant dismissal—ground for administrative discharge. One does not have to participate in a homosexual act or to dress or behave in a way which will give away one's sexual orientation. All that has to be established is that one is a homosexual.

Mrs. Currie: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that a person does not have to be engaged in any activity, but could be completely celibate, and that more than half of the soldiers discharged from the army under the rules are women?

Mr. Rogers: That is correct. One does not have to be caught having sex to be dismissed—merely being a lesbian or gay is enough. The special investigation branch immediately moves in, and routinely investigates allegations of homosexuality. Suspects are interrogated, asked to name names, their rooms are searched, their letters and diaries read and any leads followed up. As a result of those witch hunts, about 75 people a year—people who might well be celibate, non-practising homosexuals—are administratively discharged.

It is wrong for the Minister to suggest that that will alter it—it will not, under the terms that he has outlined today. Those discharged lose their careers. They might be outstanding soldiers and members of the armed forces, but simply because they are lesbian or gay they have to find new employment and they lost out on pension rights. There are instances where people have lost as much as £0·25 million in such payments.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that first, no one in this country is any longer under any obligation to join the armed forces unless they wish to do so? Secondly, the conditions under which people have to live in the armed forces are totally different from those for the civilian occupations to which he referred.

Mr. Rogers: I do not know whether that is strictly true. When I did my national service, I slept in a barrack room with 32 people and no one inquired about anyone's sexual orientation.

Mr. Bill Walker: He must be joking.

Mr. Rogers: Given his public school background, perhaps the hon. Gentleman has more knowledge of such things than I do. I do not know why some people are so defensive about that. After all, their parents ripped them out of their homes at the age of three and packed them off to a private school. They were then locked in rooms with other little boys or girls. They spent 10 years in such peculiar, unnatural circumstances, but as soon as——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that he should address me. I do not expect to see his back.

Mr. Rogers: I apologise.

As soon as those little ones become big ones, they may join the Army, the Navy or the Air Force, but if they happen to be homosexual, they are discriminated against and thrown out of the forces.

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Mr. Rogers: I am not giving way to the hon. Gentleman any more; he has muttered enough.

When Conservative Members were at public school, do they remember any time when their classmates were thrown out simply because of their homosexual orientation? How many of their classmates were sent home to their mams and dads?

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Mr. Rogers: If the hon. Gentleman did not mutter so much, I might give way to him.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rogers: I shall do so in a moment.

Last year, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces made the Government's position on this issue clear when he said:

> "It is a long-standing policy that both homosexual activity and orientation are incompatible with service in the armed forces . . .The formation within these units of sexually motivated relationships are potentially very disruptive of discipline and morale, particularly when they cross rank boundaries."

If the Government were prepared to follow the logic of their argument and said that any sexual activity—heterosexual or homosexual—was immediate grounds for dismissal from the armed forces, one could understand it. Although the same argument could be adduced for both types of activity, the Government pick out homosexual activity. That is wrong.

The composition of courts martial is also important. The Government have considered that issue and last year the Minister of State for the Armed Forces argued that officers

> "know their men far better than their equivalents did 30 or 40 years ago. The conditions in which they operate, such as in Northern Ireland or on board ship, ensure that junior officers

[Mr. Rogers]

especially are as in touch with their men as are senior non-commissioned officers."—[*Official Report*, 17 June 1991; Vol. 193, c. 115-16.]

I found that statement rather odd. I remind the Minister that 40 years ago personnel were serving on board ships in much more cramped conditions than those of today. Although conditions in the Army then were not equivalent to those which exist in Northern Ireland now, they were not dissimilar.

The Government have failed to provide evidence to support their claim that today's officers know their men better than their equivalents of 40 years ago. They should provide a much better explanation to support their argument that the expertise of officers precludes the use of NCOs on courts martial. The Minister's statement was illogical.

The Government have also continued to turn their back on the formation of organisations to represent service personnel. We are one of the few countries within NATO that does not allow service personnel organisations. The Government say that we do not need them and that people can make representations through their platoon officers or whichever chain of command they operate under. But the letter columns of the in-house Service publications, *RAF News*, *Navy News*, and the *Soldier*, continue to be filled with complaints. The regular attitude surveys carried out by the MOD may assist Ministers but they are of little assistance to Parliament.

On 17 June 1991, the Government said that they would consider providing more detailed guidelines on what is an unacceptable activity. Is the Minister now in a position to say what conclusion he has reached as a result of his considerations? We should remember that premature voluntary retirement costs the country huge sums of money. It can cost £3 million to train a fast jet pilot, but if he leaves the service for any reason—or for the reasons in which some pilots are caught these days, which are clearly outlined in the Minister's questionnaires on officer premature voluntary release—he has cost the country huge sums of money which we can ill afford.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): The hon. Gentleman said that the *Soldier* and *RAF News* were filled with complaints. I am a regular reader of *RAF News* and was trying to work out the last time I saw a complaint in that magazine.

Mr. Rogers: We shall turf them out and send them to the hon. Gentleman. I assure him that complaints appear in those magazines. However, if he wants to see complaints, he need not check in Service magazines. Why does he not bother to go to the Library and get the questionnaire on officer premature voluntary release, in which members of the armed forces give details of why they are leaving the armed forces prematurely?

The point is that, even if one soldier, sailor or airman leaves prematurely because he has a problem, it means that the chain of command is not dealing with his problem and that the problem must be dealt with. Thousands leave prematurely every year, and the problem is not being resolved. In last year's debate, the Minister said that the figures were coming down but close analysis of the figures shows that the same amount of premature voluntary retirement is taking place.

The Minister mentioned that he was acting on a Select Committee recommendation. I join him in congratulating the Select Committee, and I welcome the Government's implementation of its recommendations. We want them to go a little further in some areas, but we respect the fact that discipline within the armed forces is vital for them to carry out their functions properly. They cannot do their tough job—whether on land, sea or in the air—unless special circumstances pertain to them. But the Government could go much further.

11.3 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): First, I pay a warm tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. It is a pleasure to have heard him at the Dispatch Box, and never more so than this evening, when he introduced the debate in a manner that was as lucid as it was stylish, as one expects from him. Moreover, his speech was sympathetic to the work of the Special Select Committee, and his approval of its procedure was heartening for those who served on it. It illuminated the debate.

Normally, a late-night debate on such an order is a relatively minor affair and quickly passed over. However, the Select Committee report highlighted a number of issues. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Minister grasped the nettle of the difficult matters of homosexuality and of bullying—particularly of a racial nature—in the armed forces, and the need to maintain ethnic monitoring. I thought that he struck the right balance on those issues. I agree with the judgment of the Ministry of Defence.

The Ministry deferred judgment on a number of our recommendations. Its first deferral related to the treatment of minors being enlisted and discharged. They are important issues, and I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to reach a conclusion before long. Surely it cannot be right that a young soldier who joins at 16, becomes dissatisfied with military life, finds it different from his expectations and does not exercise his right to leave the service in the first six months, has to serve no less than five years with the colours, as the Army requires him to fulfil three years adult service after the age of 18.

An analogy, which my hon. Friend the Minister mentioned, is the difficult question whether we should require minors to serve on active duty overseas. The Select Committee was greatly exercised by this issue. We all recognised the tremendous enthusiasm of young people. Seamen could find themselves on operational duty overseas, afloat from the age of sixteen and a half, airmen could be on operational duty overseas from the age of 16 years and eight months, and soldiers could be on operational duty overseas from the age of 17.

I well understand—I am sure that it was the view of the Select Committee—that if our nation's ultimate security is at risk, age should not be a barrier to a willingness to defend our islands and their residents. But there is a genuine distinction to be drawn if our volunteer service men are sent on an overseas expedition simply by virtue of the fact that they have taken the Queen's shilling. The distinction which we sought to make was that, if the young people have a vital qualification without which their units could not perform effectively, they should go, but otherwise they should not. Furthermore, Army personnel under the age of 18 are not allowed to serve in Northern Ireland.

My hon. Friend the Minister also deferred judgment on our recommendation to combine the Royal Navy detention quarters with the military correction training centre at Colchester. Under "Options for Change", our armed forces are diminishing by the day, so such a rationalisation is overdue, even if the necessary building work will take a little time. I hope that the decision can be taken early, so that the amalgamation takes place as soon as possible.

A number of matters were not acted on. The first was the disciplinary status of our reserve forces. It was interesting to note the policy implemented by the Ministry of Defence on the use of Reservists during the Gulf war. I am sure that the Ministry is still appraising the conclusions to be drawn from it. My hon. Friend the Minister referred to the Royal Auxiliary Air Force air movements squadron which performed so admirably in the conflict—as we all knew that it would. It was strange that Territorials were unable to serve in Germany, to make good the deficiency there caused by the departure of Regulars to the Gulf. I am sure that they would have been pleased to do so. However, several specialists made an outstanding contribution—not least my hon. and gallant Friends the Members for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) and for Blaby (Mr. Robathan).

Because the Scud missiles were not as effective as expected and the Iraqi air force never achieved air superiority, the use of civilian airliners to carry freight and troops to the war zone never became a serious problem. However, the war zone could have posed a serious difficulty for civilian crews if they had sustained casualties. Unless, in such circumstances, civilian crews are required to be subject to the Air Force Act 1955, there could be a problem in a future conflict—and there might be also in the case of merchant seamen on board ships taken out from trade.

I know that the Ministry is examining these issues. A mini White Paper on Britain's reserve forces was published before the general election, but we have not heard the full outcome of the proposals that it contains.

Finally, there is a controversial point—the question of the standing civilian courts in Germany primarily, but also in other places overseas where British forces are stationed, which have jurisdiction over the dependent personnel of our service men.

They function in Germany as a legacy of the NATO status of forces Act. Civilians who commit offences there can be subject to German or British military legal jurisdiction. My belief is that civilian offenders should be wholly under German legal jurisdiction. This may be the case already—the necessary changes might have been implemented. If not, in view of German unification and the changed relationship between the host country and British forces stationed on German federal soil, I hope that our Government will re-examine the issue.

I commend my hon. Friend the Minister again for his enlightened attitude to our recommendations, and I am grateful for the decisions that he took.

11.12 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) will forgive me if I do not follow him in the points that he made, though the House acknowledges that he made them with some authority.

The Minister clearly acknowledged that good morale is essential if the disciplinary code is to be rarely used—and that is devoutly to be hoped. The hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) and I have the good fortune to be halfway through the new and splendid defence attachment scheme. Currently, we are closely and interestingly involved with the Royal Air Force. Any criticisms that I make are directed not at the RAF's leadership but at the political leadership. I shall not seek to embarrass the hon. Member for Harlow, who has accompanied me on my visits, but he may concur at least to some extent with my observations.

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

One is aware of the need for contraction and change. Perhaps it was a pity that the House paid overwhelming attention to the county regiments rather than to the other forces of the Crown. The Minister must understand that, if the high morale of the highest quality air force in the world is to be safeguarded, current anxieties require attention.

Only a few days ago, I spoke to a number of RAF personnel of senior aircraftsman and junior technician ranks who are developing considerable skills, and who would normally have a profound commitment to the service. They are marrying and starting families and they need to know whether they will become corporals or sergeants and receive a pay rise. They cannot see much prospect of the advancement that it is natural they wish to see. If the morale of those who will fill the senior NCO ranks in a few years' time is allowed to diminish further, there may be cause for profound anxiety. I hope that the Minister will ensure that that concern is given more attention.

An even more serious matter—one that requires urgent and balanced political consideration—is contractorisation. It seems that in this context the RAF faces serious long-term danger. If the various mechanical and technical services are contractorised at the present pace, disadvantages will ensue. We shall be capable of mounting an adequate defence of the realm only between the hours of 9 am and 5 pm. As jobs are transferred to civilians, RAF stations will become half empty, at least after 5 pm.

The Government seem to believe that it is cheaper to employ a skilled tradesman who is a civilian than a skilled service man. If we continue to give jobs to civilians, the skilled tradesman in the RAF will be so frequently taken from his job to undertake guard duty and other such jobs that he will become even more expensive, which will lead to further contractorisation and civilianisation.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Member continues, perhaps he will explain how his remarks relate to discipline.

Mr. Hardy: I shall do that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

If service men see their ranks diminish and the numbers of their colleagues in their camps contract, RAF stations will be weaker in terms of their leisure activity and quality of life. Morale will be adversely affected and disciplinary problems are bound to increase. I think that that will be recognised by hon. Members who have examined these matters.

Frustration may stem from disciplinary inadequacies. The hon. Member for Harlow and I recently visited RAF Sealand, where in several instances Government policy appeared to be exceedingly dangerous and likely to lead to disaffection, at least to some extent. We were told of the positive push for more privatisation. We met a small group of men and we were given some interesting information about their professional activities.

It appears that, shortly before the Tornados went to the Gulf, it was discovered that they needed a gadget called a capacitator. The RAF went to private contractors, who said, "Yes, we can make the capacitators. It will cost you several thousand pounds each and it will take 16 to 18 weeks before we can deliver them." A small group of men at RAF Sealand gave up their weekends and produced capacitators for £105 each. As a result, the Tornados were able to go to the Gulf.

I opened a book—this is relevant to the question of morale—about the Gulf war which had been published in the United States of America. Its reference to the contribution of the RAF was to state that 12 Tornados had been shot down, which was not true. In my view, leadership within the service is of high quality, but leadership at political level allows that sort of statement to go unchallenged.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I do not want the hon. Gentleman and me to seem too much like a double act, but we are doing an attachment together, and he has talked a great deal of common sense. Although I am not attacking Government policy in any way, I think—and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree—that the Minister should consider carefully what is being achieved at Sealand.

Time after time, millions of pounds of taxpayers' money were saved by the ingenuity and hard work of people there. It will cost £600 or £700 for contractors to provide a little cable; at Sealand, it can be done for £50. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that what is happening there is a model of what should be happening throughout the armed services, not just in the RAF?

Mr. Hardy: I do agree. Because other hon. Members wish to speak, I shall not labour the point, but I hope that I shall catch the eye of the Chair towards the end of our attachment or soon after it.

Many Opposition Members were never ardent cold war warriors, even if we accepted the need for national defence. however, it seems obvious to me, as an internationalist, that as the world moves towards having sane international authority and the capacity to make a contribution to securing peace and stability, Britain will have a role to play, because our armed forces are of very high quality, Surely, in terms of quality, the RAF is unmatched in the world, and it will have to maintain the capacity to make that contribution, as it did in the Gulf.

When we watch the Red Arrows fly, with their remarkable skill and precision—bearing in mind that that outfit employs only 71 people—and when we see the contribution made on, say, Battle of Britain day, in an entirely voluntary capacity, at the splendid RAF station in South Yorkshire, Finningley, we must accept that, despite the efforts made at the stations by RAF personnel of all ranks, they need rather more political championing than they have received over the past two years.

Sadly, over the past 12 months, a myth has arisen that is very hard on the tradition—for tradition it is, although it involves the youngest service men. That myth holds that the Gulf contribution was of no account and, indeed, unsuccessful. I consider that it was remarkably successful in ensuring that a very large Iraqi air force was grounded. Over the past few weeks, not a single Front Bencher did not allow ridiculous twaddle to be talked about Bomber Command, and thus about the heart of the history and tradition of the RAF. That is relevant to discipline, because tradition and history are.

No one has paid any attention. No one responsible for the political leadership of the Air Force—I am not talking about serving ranks—told the British public that the contribution of Bomber Command, and the sacrifice of the

lives of thousands of air crew members, ensured that the German industry produced fighters rather than bombers. We must ask which towns would have been blitzed if those men had not flown in German night skies. If they had not, thousands of German guns and German soldiers would probably have achieved success on the Russian front and brought a very different accounting when the Normandy invasion took place.

The RAF is aware of that, and it is a pity that no one in government made it plain—just as it is a pity that the Government have been so obsessed by some of their articles of dogma in the past two years. In the various RAF stations that we have visited, we have been met with the utmost courtesy and co-operation, for which I am extremely grateful—as, I know, is the hon. Member for Harlow. We would, however, be acting irresponsibly if we did not reflect some of the anxieties that we have encountered, to which I trust the Government will attend a little more carefully.

11.24 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I thank my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and his right hon. and hon. Friends for the first positive step that has been taken for a number of years to ease the burden carried by homosexual and lesbian people. It is entirely appropriate that it should have been made by a Conservative Government, led by a Prime Minister who wants the nation to be at ease with itself; a nation in which every citizen is encouraged to make his or her best contribution.

It is worth remembering that 78 gay or lesbian military personnel were dismissed from the forces in 1990 after admitting to homosexuality. Six were court-martialled and three were imprisoned for 18 months for offences that were not crimes under civilian law. In the case of lesbians, they have never been crimes under civilian law. Between 1987 and 1989, more than 300 were discharged and 32 imprisoned. As has already been said, we cannot afford to lose good soldiers at that rate.

Mr. Wilkinson: Good soldiers?

Mrs. Currie: Yes, good soldiers. These people were volunteers. After having been recruited and trained, over 300 were discharged. Over half the people discharged from the Army were women. The Minister should be proud that at a stroke he removed that legal discrimination. I hope that he will ask for any existing prosecutions to be stopped and the slate wiped clean for the individuals concerned.

Before the Minister becomes too complacent—as the response to his announcement showed he still has a little further to travel—it is a complex and sophisticated journey. On the basis of what he said, a homosexual soldier—I use "soldier" to cover all the forces, and both males and females—even if entirely celibate and not practising, could still be dismissed from the services.

That raises two different questions: first, how do we treat homosexuals in our society at large? The civilian police, just like the military police, should have something better to do with their time than hound people. That is not on any longer. That is why it will not do to continue the general armed forces ban on homosexuality. It leaves good soldiers, good personnel, open to blackmail and undue pressure. It is way out of line with what happens in the armed forces of a number of our NATO allies.

That leads, secondly, to the whole question of pastoral care in the armed forces. The issues are very complex. I have read the Select Committee report on the Armed Forces Bill. It is about time that a woman was on the Select Committee. That does not mean that I am volunteering, but the fact that all the members are male flavours some of its reports. However, the Ministry of Defence is getting much better at discipline and is to be congratulated. It has dealt much better with bullying. It is dealing with alcoholism far better than it used to do. The Ministry has picked up the issues that face women soldiers—for example, maternity leave, instead of just dismissing them out of hand when they get pregnant, even though it took a court case to push it into doing that.

Now we have to face the question of what happens when two soldiers have sexual relationships, whether they are on duty or off duty, and what to do about the mess and the misery that can occur when a soldier has an affair with somebody outside the services. This is a matter that affects people with other sexual orientations. Recently there have been two dreadful cases involving the murder of people associated with or in the armed forces. They show how far tragic passions can take them. Now that women are serving with distinction in combat positions in all the armed forces, the issue is being addressed. It is being tackled in the Navy, at least. Reference is made to that in the Select Committee report. We need to take that a little further.

We often deal with very young people. I put on record that I wonder whether sixteen and a half is too young to be recruiting soldiers. The advice that I give to my sixteen-and-a-half-year-old constituents, male and female, is that they ought to be at school.

Mr. Wilkinson: My hon. Friend's point is exactly the one that the Select Committee thought about most seriously: would the parents of young people—16 and 17-year-olds who are, in some cases, children—wish them to be under the influence of overtly homosexual people? I do not think they would. They would wish the environment to be as nomal as possible, compatible with the rigours of military life and discipline.

Mrs. Currie: I say to my hon. Friend, whose view I treat with the greatest possible respect, that I have a 17-year-old daughter and I think that she should still be at school. I should worry as much if she went into the armed forces, not because of some bloke or woman who might attack her but because she would be putting her life at risk—that is the point about joining the armed forces.

Mr. Hayes *rose*——

Mrs. Currie: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me for not giving way, but time is very short.

We are talking about young people who are often far from home and often for the first time. They are often in dangerous or isolated circumstances and stress is a big problem. These were the issues raised with us by the Gulf families campaign about soldiers of all ages and backgrounds and the difficult circumstances in which they can find themselves.

There are several issues that we must put to the Ministry of Defence. How are we to ensure the maintenance of good discipline in all environments, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation? How are we to ensure that those responsible for discipline are sensitive

[Mrs. Currie]

and supportive and do not merely put the boot in and the cuffs on at the first hint of trouble? I think that it will mean a lot of retraining for those in charge of personnel matters because the evidence given to the Select Committee by some senior officers do not fill me with confidence. Some talked as if this were still the 19th century.

With those words I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends and support the order.

11.30 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I begin on a note of unanimity by agreeing that there is inadequate time for the House to discuss this important order. I hope that those who fix things in the House will take that on board.

The continuation order gives further life to section 1 of the Armed Forces Act 1991 but one must go back a stage further to realise that we are in effect renewing the Army Act 1955 which, I submit, is an old Act requiring a great deal of revision. I listened to the Minister talking about the attic of regulations and disciplinary procedures which need to be examined. To that I say, "Hear, hear," because the 1955 Act deals with a number of capital offences which are inappropriate and archaic, in addition to other matters to which the Minister referred.

I hope that this will be the last year that we shall deal with disciplinary matters by order. Perhaps in future there will be primary legislation to deal with discipline in the armed forces, which will give us appropriate, modern disciplinary codes for all service men.

I shall not vote against the order tonight if there is a Division. However, I hope that if the Minister takes on board the need for new legislation, it will incorporate some of the points raised tonight, especially the liberalisation of matters affecting people's sexual orientation. I hope that new legislation will mean that it is no longer a matter for disciplinary action.

Another issue that I hope will be included in any future legislation relates to the 307 service men executed in the 1914-18 war on charges including cowardice, desertion, disobedience, sleeping at posts, quitting posts and hitting a superior officer. Future legislation should include a schedule to exonerate them and/or give them a pardon. That could be the vehicle for excusing brave British soldiers from unfair ignominy.

Hon. Members may wonder why I raise this issue tonight. This morning I received a letter from a gentleman who wrote:

"I myself was a soldier during that war and I fought in Belgium and France from 1917 until the war ended. During that time I actually saw posted an official notice reporting the execution of a soldier in my own unit and I remember vividly the feeling of horror I had and my fear that such a fate would befall me. I was only 18 at this time and now at the age of 94 I applaud your efforts to get this matter reviewed."

I hope that the Minister will bear that in mind, and that, if nothing else, the Secretary of State will agree to receive a small delegation in the not-too-distant future, so that we can amplify our concern and demonstrate why there has been a miscarriage of justice and why—even at this late stage—it is appropriate to review the subject. That could be done fairly, to the advantage of those British soldiers who lie with their comrades in Flanders, and all along the western front as well as in Gallipoli.

I hope that the Minister will be prepared to reconsider. I realise that the hour is late and that there are only a few minutes of the debate left, so I shall not labour the point further. This is a matter associated with discipline, and thousands of people in this country still feel strongly about it. It is time that we recognised the people who were shot at dawn as victims of the great war, and as brave British soldiers.

11.35 pm

Mr. Aitken: The debate must end in five minutes' time. With the leave of the House, I shall reply briefly to some of the points raised by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I am sorry that, for reasons of time, I shall not have the opportunity to reply to all the points, but I shall do my best to cover what I consider to be the principal questions which need a response. I am sorry that my response will be so brief and that so many hon. Members who wished to speak have not been able to make their contributions.

Perhaps because of his good nature, the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), who opened the debate for the Opposition, found it difficult to criticise much of what the Government were doing. I am grateful for that. He was straining a little far when he banged on about bullying and made it sound as if it were an enormous problem. Even one case of bullying is too many; the services take an immensely serious view of it, and it has been made clear throughout the armed forces that it will not be tolerated. A range of measures to combat bullying have been introduced in the past few years, including the banning of initiation ceremonies.

We should see the matter in perspective, however bad any individual case may be. We have about 300,000 service men, yet in 1989 only 25 allegations of bullying were substantiated by courts martial; in 1990 there were 11 cases, in 1991 six cases and in 1992 two cases. That is hardly endemic bullying—as the hon. Gentleman described it.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Does the Minister agree that, despite what he said, on the basis of the experience of a constituent of mine there is still an urgent need to review the subject of bullying? The Select Committee report represents some advance, but it does not go far enough. There should be a specific offence of bullying, and we should do more in addition to the measures introduced in 1988 to start to wipe out institutionalised bullying in the armed forces.

Mr. Aitken: I cannot accept the phrase "institutionalised bullying", because it implies that the institution itself approves—which it definitely and categorically does not. But I hear what the hon. Lady has said and I am sympathetic to her argument that any bullying is unacceptable, appalling, disgraceful and not to be tolerated. I take it from what she said that she had a serious case involving a constituent. If so, if she writes to me or comes to see me—or rather, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces—the matter will be taken immensely seriously and thoroughly and carefully investigated.

Ms. Walley *rose*——

Mr. Aitken: I do not think that I should give way to the hon. Lady twice, as other important speakers contributed to the debate.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), the Chairman of the

Select Committee, who, with his Committee, has done a superb job of work. I was grateful for his generous comments about me, and I thank him above all for showing that the Select Committee system can work well. It takes two hands to clap, and both the Government and the Select Committee have responded in equal part in introducing many reforms which started with the Committee—to its credit.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood and my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) referred at some length to the treatment of minors. That is a difficult subject and, as I said earlier, the Government are considering it carefully.

The services do not wish to take on personnel who cannot adapt to service life. We make every effort to ensure that such recruitment does not take place. Any minor has the opportunity after the first 28 days of service and before six months' service has elapsed to leave easily. Thereafter, any request to leave the services—usual contracts are for three or four years—on compassionate or other grounds will be carefully and sympathetically considered on merit.

As Major General Stone said in evidence to the Committee, it costs the taxpayer £23,000 to train a junior infantryman. Such resources should not be easily thrown away if there is a brief moment of personal unhappiness in a young person's career. We are carefully considering the matters raised in that connection this evening——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Army, Air Force and Naval Discipline Acts (Continuation) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 2nd June, be approved.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Many hon. Members—Conservative, Labour and the Liberal Democrat spokesman—have been disappointed not to be able to speak on the important matters raised in the defence debate. Could the Clerks investigate when the rules were changed? You will recall that the late George Wigg was able, under exempted business, to go on at great length on precisely such orders as this one.

By what alchemy did this become time-limited business and cease to be exempted business? Many of us wanted to raise all sorts of important personal issues. My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) wanted to say a great deal more, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay). The Liberal Democrat spokesman was not called either. Doubtless a battery of Conservative Members wanted to make constituency points too. How did this come about?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I sympathise with hon. Members who have not been able to speak, but I can only operate the rules as they stand. I am sure that a little perusal with the Clerks or in the Library might throw light on the history of the matter.

Ms. Walley: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I echo what my hon. Friend said. I wanted to speak not so much about an individual case of bullying as about the implications that arise——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady cannot continue the debate under the guise of a point of order.

Ms. Walley: If I may——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. You may not.

Rail Service (London-Cleethorpes)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

11.42 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I am most grateful to those who determine whether we secure Adjournment debates that I should have the good fortune to be able to raise the subject of the direct rail services between London and Cleethorpes. I am delighted to see attending the debate the Minister for Public Transport, who is to reply, my hon. Friends the Members for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) and for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), and the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). They too have an interest in the debate following the recent proposal by British Rail to withdraw the high-speed 125 train service that operates once a day in the morning from Cleethorpes to King's Cross and calls at the stations of Cleethorpes, Barnetby, and Habrough in my constituency, and then at Great Grimsby, Market Rasen and Lincoln before joining the main line at Newark. So the train services my constituents and those of the other hon. Members whom I have listed.

I know that my remarks will be heard by British Rail because of the forceful support offered by the constituents of my hon. Friends.

This train is the premier service to London from north Lincolnshire and south Humberside. It was introduced 10 years ago in 1982. Until then, we had four direct trains in each direction with full first and second-class carriages. They were diesel-haul locos with buffet and dining car services. Those four trains were withdrawn in 1982 and BR said that they were to be replaced by a single, but premier, train which would arrive in London about 9 am, and that there would be a return train in the evening. That train has been well used and well supported for 10 years by local people in all our constituencies.

Four years ago, when BR proposed to introduce the new 225 trains—the trains with electric overhead wires—my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle and I wondered what might happen if all high-speed main line train services were only 225 trains. We recognised that there was no electrification between Newark and Cleethorpes. In 1988, we took the trouble to press BR very firmly about the future of high-speed train services between south Humberside and north Lincolnshire and London.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle and I wrote to BR stating that we noted the tremendous investment that the Government were making available to BR for the 225 electrified trains. We said that it might be possible that one day the diesel electric-powered 125 trains, like those on the Cleethorpes to London service, might wear out. We wanted to know what would happen then.

We were accused of raising fears where there were none. However, we were very specific in what we said to BR. Back in 1988, I wrote asking specifically about the future of that train after 31 December 1991—just 150 days ago. I received a letter from Mr. Prideaux, who was then the managing director of InterCity. He wrote in 1988:

"Thank you for your letter of 21 April. I would confirm the assurances given in the letters of my InterCity marketing manager at York that we plan to continue the operation of a through service between Cleethorpes and King's Cross for the foreseeable future. We have not reached the stage of planning timetables beyond 1991, but it may help if I say that we have already decided to retain a number of refurbished high-speed train sets to operate services beyond the electrified area including that to Cleethorpes after that date."

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle was taken to task by Mr. Holland, the InterCity marketing manager, when he wrote to BR in similar terms to mine. Mr. Holland assured him:

"May I support the assurances about the future of the train which you have already received from Chris Austin British Rail's parliamentary affairs manager. The train performs reasonably satisfactorily in the financial sense and serves an area with potential for future growth. There is no (nor has there been) any intention of withdrawing it. We cannot of course unconditionally guarantee its continued existence for ever any more than any commercial business can indefinitely underwrite any product since its survival will obviously depend on its usage and earnings remaining satisfactory. But I am puzzled as to why you should believe that this train is to be withdrawn. Can you elucidate upon the cause of your fears?"

My hon. Friend was taken to task in no uncertain terms by BR. Those assurances today are not worth the paper on which they are written.

I took the trouble to write to BR when the announcement was made 10 days ago, and I received responses from the parliamentary affairs manager and Mr. Brian Birdsall, the director of the east coast main line. He refuted my allegation that BR had misled my hon. Friends, the hon. Member for Great Grimsby and me. It denies that anything that it said in 1988 was at variance with the position in 1992. Never again will I treat anything that I see on paper from British Rail as anything other than worthless.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing this debate. It shows great initiative and the determination of hon. Members to oppose the proposal. He is telling a story of deceit and incompetence. As a supporter of British Rail and public transport—indeed, I am a frequent user of it—I find it very hard to love British Rail or even to support or condone its behaviour. It made promises that it obviously had no intention of keeping and which it is now betraying, and it is badly letting down our area. Like the hon. Gentleman, I want it to know that we shall oppose its proposal tooth and nail with every weapon at our disposal.

Is not the most appalling aspect of the sorry saga the fact that British Rail is not only judge and jury in its own case but able to manipulate the evidence as well? It says that usage has not been adequate, but it is the controller of that usage. It looks as though it has set out deliberately to run down usage of that valuable service to our area by bringing the times forward to 6 am, a very inconvenient time, and changing them later in the evening so that people find it more difficult to spend a day in London and get back quickly. It has reduced services on the train, particularly breakfast and restaurant car services. Most appalling of all, it has cut out cheap fares on the service with the deliberate intention of keeping places empty, to fill up at Newark and beyond. In other words, it is depriving the people of Grimsby and Cleethorpes of the service by increasing the fares so that it can fill the train later on.

Does not that show that British Rail is prepared to fiddle the evidence so that it can use the remaining 125 trains for other purposes elsewhere which are more

convenient to it but not to the area? Does not that show also that it will do the same thing again? If it takes off the service, it will then use the form in usage——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. That is a speech, not an intervention.

Mr. Mitchell: I am most grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker, I——

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, but that is enough.

Mr. Brown: I could not disagree with anything that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby has said. He is absolutely right about deliberately running down the service. British Rail has attacked me for making that allegation. Indeed, I have gone even further than the hon. Gentleman. I have accused British Rail of sabotaging the service, but that is what is happening.

Until last year, it was possible for passengers from Cleethorpes, Grimsby, Market Rasen and Lincoln to use the cheapest fare of the day on that train. Last year, British Rail withdrew that cheapest fare. If a housewife wishes to go to London as a casual passenger—perhaps she wants to do a day's shopping in London—she is encouraged not to use that train, because the cheapest fare of the day is now not available until after 9.30.

As the hon. Member for Great Grimsby has said, British Rail is judge and jury, yet it wants to have it both ways. Normally, one restricts the use of cheap tickets on a train in the morning and evening rush hours because it is a full train and one wants to use a pricing policy to ensure that those who travel on the train regularly, such as season ticket holders or business men, can get seats. Until last year, the casual traveller was encouraged, with all sorts of promotions and advertising deals, to take advantage of that train. Now they are denied the opportunity. Then British Rail has the cheek to advise the four hon. Members who represent north Lincolnshire and south Humberside that the reason that it will suspend the service with effect from next year is because not enough people use the train between Newark and Cleethorpes. That is a ridiculous argument.

British Rail is proposing that we should have small regional connecting services between Newark and Cleethorpes. That will simply encourage more people to drive their motor cars to either Newark or to Doncaster. In two or three years, British Rail will say, "Oh well, none of you is using the line between Cleethorpes and Newark, so we are certainly going to close it between Barnetby and Lincoln," leaving my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle without any railway service whatsoever in Market Rasen.

We are already seeing the beginnings of that plan of attack. British Rail is making it more financially worthwhile for a passenger to travel to London via Doncaster from Grimsby and Cleethorpes and Barnetby. The ticket via Doncaster to London costs £31. The cheapest ticket via Newark costs £38. British Rail will encourage more and more people to travel via Doncaster to London to enable it to reserve its position on the total closure of the line in three or four years.

I have dealt with British Rail for many years. I have seen its promises on pieces of paper. I have quoted those promises today, four years later, in the House. I can see exactly what will happen. Does my hon. Friend the Minister agree that there is at the least a case for local Members of Parliament saying to British Rail that, as the Government intend to privatise it during the next 18 months to two years, it should defer its decision? In the event that a private operator wants to take over the service, it should still be in operation on vesting day when ownership and control of British Rail or its track authority passes to the private sector. It would be an act of sabotage if British Rail ran down services and the direct train, in particular before the private sector had an opportunity to operate in the new environment that the Government intend to create in later years.

British Rail wrongly and unfairly seeks to put the blame on the Government. In its letter of 15 June, it says that anything that it said to me in 1988 is made redundant by the new targets on assets employed which the Government require it to meet. I do not accept that. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister would elucidate on whether that is just another of British Rail's lame excuses.

I believe that, properly marketed, the train could continue to be as viable as it has been in the past. It is our only link with London. We used to have an air service from Humberside airport. We used to have competition. That competition spurred both Air UK and British Rail to provide a good service. For a time, we had true competition. There is no longer a direct air service between south Humberside and north Lincolnshire and London. Now there is not to be a direct railway service.

At the least British Rail should defer its decision until ownership has passed from the state to the private sector. I understand that it will be possible for private companies to operate over British Rail tracks when new legislation is in place in about 18 months. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister can confirm that that is the case.

In the meantime, I hope that the attendance of my hon. Friends the Members for Lincoln and for Gainsborough and Horncastle and the hon. Member for Great Grimsby will be noted by British Rail. I agree with every word that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby said. I hope that British Rail will take the fact that the debate has been attended by all the Members of Parliament for north Lincolnshire and south Humberside as a signal that we are all angry on behalf of our constituents. We shall not let the train go without one hell of a fight. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State can give us some words of encouragement.

11.58 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): This is an important debate. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) for the vigour and clarity with which he argued his case. I understand that he made the same speech in a debate earlier this evening. That is a great credit to his ingenuity as a parliamentarian but also clearly underlines the importance of the subject.

The presence on the Front Bench of two fellow Ministers who represent contiguous constituences, straining at the leash to contribute to the debate but having to remain mute, is a great stimulus to provide what I hope will be a constructive response. I find it interesting, but not entirely surprising, that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) has joined in the debate and that there has been apparent agreement between Members on both sides of the House on the issue.

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

British Rail has not proposed to close the line. We are concentrating on the absence of a through service from Cleethorpes, via Great Grimsby and Newark to London. The existence of a through service is often a crucial factor when business men and women decide how to travel to London. I accept, as I am sure that British Rail accepts, that a connecting service—albeit a frequent class 158 service—on the line from Cleethorpes to Newark will not be acceptable to some passengers. They might prefer to drive direct to Newark, with consequences for the road system, or to drive straight to London. That is not an acceptable or a sensible consequence environmentally or in terms of the best usage of our rail system, and it is important to look for solutions.

British Rail has tried to encourage patronage of the line. As far as I am aware, the line is almost unique. I can find only one other example where saver tickets are issued on an InterCity line. My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes criticised British Rail for not offering super-saver tickers, which were withdrawn, but at least saver tickets are still in existence and that is almost unique. The truth is that fewer than 100 passengers use the through service on the line beyond Newark—there is one through service in either direction each day.

I am sure that my hon. Friend understands that I have no power to intervene in British Rail's decision. There is no way in which the Government can direct British Rail to continue a through service after May 1993. One can argue the case—as I am sure that my hon. Friends and the hon. Member for Great Grimsby will do with vigour—but the Government cannot issue a direction.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes asked two key questions. First, he asked me to comment on InterCity's objectives and, secondly, to look to the future. What are the possible solutions for the service, if British Rail perseveres with its intention to withdraw it?

First, on the InterCity objectives, InterCity provides not a social but a commercial service. I am grateful for my hon. Friend's implicit acceptance of that policy. I know that he supports the notion that InterCity should seek to operate commercially and to cover its costs. There is no division between the two sides of the House on that issue. The Labour party and the Government are at one in expecting InterCity at least to recover its revenue expenses. We have set ambitious targets for InterCity. Clearly they have not been met for the past year and are unlikely to be met this year, because of the effects of the recession, but they are certainly more modest than the targets that would apply to the private sector, and do not entail the sort of return on assets that a private sector bus operator, airline, or any other provider of transport, would expect. However, it is not a social service, and British Rail is right to seek to protect its bottom line and to adjust the services it provides to strive to meet the objectives that we have set.

My hon. Friend asks whether British Rail is fair to blame the Government. If he is referring to the objectives that we have set for it, I am unrepentant. It is important that BR has targets to meet. It has not done so this year, but those targets are modest and, in a reasonable economic climate, achievable. I am sure that my hon. Friend would be happy for BR to achieve those targets in its commercial services.

The second, more important, question relates to the implications of our BR privatisation proposals for the service from Cleethorpes to London. I very much hope that the private sector will consider that service. I hope that the debate will stimulate its interest. In the past few weeks, I have spoken to several dozen potential freight and passenger service operators and a number would be interested in running such a service.

My hon. Friend wrote to me about the loading factors yesterday and he might be interested to know about them. British Rail has told me that passenger numbers on the two InterCity services between Newark and Cleethorpes are very low and have fallen in recent years. The south-bound morning train carried on average 170 in 1987, falling to 120 in 1990 and further to 90 in 1991. The corresponding figures for the evening return train were 130 in 1987, 100 in 1990, and 90 in 1991. So there are now barely 100 passengers to be found on a train with a capacity of 480.

Mr. Michael Brown: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for obtaining those interesting and helpful figures for me. I am also grateful to him for kindly agreeing to meet a delegation next week from the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) and myself. I can give my hon. Friend the reason for the fall in passengers. Those who are on a tight budget now wait until 9.30 before using the super-saver ticket on the train to Newark, where they change. If that super-saver ticket was once again available on the direct train, more people would use it.

Mr. Freeman: I have much sympathy with my hon. Friend's argument. Our proposal for franchising passenger services will permit the operator of a privately run train to make such crucial decisions about pricing in order to tap the market.

Our legislative policies, which we hope will receive Royal Assent next year, will open access so that private operators are encouraged to run new services and franchise existing services. Next year, BR may decide to withdraw the Cleethorpes service. I have no power to stop it doing so—that commercial judgment is its responsibility.

A private sector operator may consider the loading factors and find them depressing. However, it might believe that the service could be improved if the fare structure was altered, the service was better marketed and the times of the trains were changed. Any such timetable change, however, would have to be negotiated with BR. We propose a right of appeal to a regulator should it be impossible to reach agreement between the potential operator of any particular service and BR.

A new operator may consider introducing the changes I have described and may consider introducing on-board services such as providing coffee and a newspaper for every commuter from Great Grimsby. Many private sector operators want to change the quality of such services and the timing of the trains.

There is a lot to play for. I hope that the private sector will not be put off by the raw figures. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be interested to know that the cost of running the diesel through-train service is £1 million a year. That train travels in the morning from Cleethorpes to London—presumably it stays there for part of the day—and returns in the evening. That figure includes

operation costs, which are exacerbated by the need to provide on-train door assistance at stations with short platforms, and cleaning facilities at Cleethorpes.

The extra revenue for the portion between Newark and Cleethorpes is some £300,000 a year. Therefore, British Rail calculates a saving of £700,000 by withdrawing the service, on the assumption that passengers will transfer to other British Rail services and use east coast main line service trains where additional capacity exists. So no extra cost is entailed in providing that service.

There is a prize for British Rail for improving profitability, but also an opportunity for the private sector. When my hon. Friend comes to see me next week with the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, I shall rehearse at greater length the exciting challenge for the private sector in franchising and operating services on British Rail. I cannot foresee whether that will mean that a private sector train will be able to provide through services if British Rail withdraws them. There are 12 months to go, but the Government certainly intend to open up those opportunities, and I hope that they will be grasped.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 18 June 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON UNDERGROUND (JUBILEE) BILL *(By Order)*
Read a Second time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (GREEN PARK) BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 25 June.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Shotguns

1. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to initiate a review of the law on shotguns.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): Controls on shotguns were strengthened under the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988. The firearms consultative committee has a statutory duty to keep the controls of the Firearms Acts under constant review and make proposals to my right hon. and learned Friend as it considers necessary.

Mr. Milburn: Is the Minister aware that the number of shotgun offences in the northern region has more than doubled in the past six years? Is he concerned at the fact that the existing laws allow a shotgun certificate to be obtained without a person either giving good justification or undergoing proper training? Does he believe that it is in the public interest that children as young as 12 are allowed, legally, to hold a shotgun certificate? When will the Minister bring forward proper proposals to protect the public better from lethal weapons?

Mr. Wardle: I am aware of the increase in the number of offences involving weapons. However, it is worth bearing in mind that out of all the recorded incidents in 1990, only 0·2 per cent. involved the use of such weapons. I have seen the hon. Gentleman's early-day motion. Of course, he will understand that I cannot comment on the incident in Darlington because it is under investigation by the Police Complaints Authority. The consultative committee has a statutory duty to keep the law under constant review. In the debates we had before the enactment of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988, consideration was given to placing shotguns under section 1 control. It was decided not to do that and that controls were best left in the hands of the police. The chief officer of a police force is empowered to withhold a licence if he believes that the public will be at risk or that the person applying for a certificate is unsuitable. The controls have been strengthened.

Identity Cards

2. **Sir John Hunt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further consideration has been given to the introduction of identity cards; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I am not at present persuaded of the case for a national identity card system.

Sir John Hunt: My right hon. and learned Friend's reply is a bit disappointing. Is he aware that there is growing support in the country and, I believe, in the House for a system of identity cards as a means of combating fraud, terrorism and illegal immigration? As most of us

carry a variety of plastic cards at all times, what is the possible objection to another one, with a photograph, which would add to our safety and security?

Mr. Clarke: I said in my reply that I was not at present persuaded, but, obviously, my hon. Friend will try to persuade me in the course of time. The last time the Government considered this issue we were simply not satisfied that there were any great advantages, from the law enforcement point of view, in introducing a national identity card system. That was then the opinion of most people in the police service. However, I am aware that, recently the Association of Chief Police Officers offered a rather different opinion when it gave evidence to the Select Committee on Home Affairs. I hope that it will send its representations to me and work out in more detail what value it thinks such a system might have for law enforcement. At the moment, I do not see that case.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Home Secretary aware that Labour Members are certainly not persuaded that there is any justification for such a scheme? It would be extremely unfortunate if in peacetime, despite terrorism, identity cards were reintroduced in this country. Some of us might consider that that is another continental idea that we can well do without in Britain.

Mr. Clarke: Countries on the continent are divided on the issue. Eight European Community countries have identity cards and four do not. The bulk of people in Britain are prepared to support anything that helps the police and other authorities in their proper work of law enforcement and detecting crime. We must be persuaded that identity cards would be of substantial help to them and that they would be used in a way that did not damage relationships between the police and any section of the community.

Mr. James Hill: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the first point that the police must establish is identification? What better way is there to make that identification than through an identity card with a photograph, and even a fingerprint, which would enable us to go back to the days when people were identifiable. That would surely help the police.

Mr. Clarke: All of us are used to having to produce some modest proof of identification on a number of occasions. Most people do not object to producing their driving licences or credit cards for someone who is entitled to ask to see them. A national identity card scheme would have to be much more secure, and a cost and difficulties would be involved in issuing identity cards. The police would have to put a case forward for saying that there was a sufficient problem in identifying people to make it necessary to go to those lengths.

Mr. Darling: Does the Home Secretary accept that a compulsory requirement to carry identity cards would be the subject of deep resentment for many people? Has he had any discussions with his European counterparts about the possibility of compulsory ID cards being introduced in the European Community after the removal of frontiers in continental Europe? I appreciate that we shall maintain our frontiers—the right hon. and learned Gentleman has our support—but what is the position on the carrying of identity cards by British citizens in this country and in continental Europe?

Mr. Clarke: As usual, the House is accurately representing the range of views on whether people would object to carrying identity cards in this country. In the first place, it all depends on whether anybody can make a satisfactory case for carrying them from a law enforcement point of view. We shall then look at the objections that might arise.

There is no pressure on us to introduce a European-wide identity card and no such suggestion is coming from our partners in the Community. I have explained to our partners that, from the point of view of immigration control, we believe that we are entitled to continue to rely on our present system of frontier controls, and that is what we shall do.

Mr. Ashby: My right hon. and learned Friend must look at the reality of the situation. When internal frontiers disappear, as undoubtedly they will, a form of smart identity card will have to be introduced. Is this not the time to start planning for that? We should be going ahead with such a scheme for that, if for no other, reason.

Mr. Clarke: We stand ready to sign an external frontiers convention when the Spanish withdraw their objections to one of its provisions. But that will not provide the European Community with some impregnable external frontier which will obviate the need for internal controls from the point of view of illegal immigration, terrorism, drugs and other matters. We are satisfied that we are entitled, under our treaty obligations, to retain our present system of frontier controls and that is what we propose to do. We are not looking at identity cards in that context at this time.

Young Offenders

3. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the penal institutions for young offenders which Home Office Ministers have visited in the last 12 months.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): The young offender institutions visited in the last 12 months were Portland, New Hall, Finnamore Wood, Moorland, Northallerton, Feltham, Drake Hall and Huntercombe.

Miss Lestor: Those visits having been made, the hon. Gentleman must be aware of the enormous concern that is felt by specialist groups and others about the conditions under which some young men are being held, with a lack of educational and recreational facilities and a lack of specialist psychiatric treatment. Is he aware that if we are to avoid more suicides and attempted suicides among people at a very vulnerable age, more measures must be taken now to ensure that proper accommodation and facilities are provided, particularly for the very young?

Mr. Lloyd: Much of the accommodation is extremely good, as the hon. Lady would know if she visited some of the establishments. There are, of course, great worries, and Judge Tumim highlighted a number of them in his report. He also said that good work was being done. I am concerned that there should be positive and purposeful activity in all institutions for young offenders. That is the aim of the prison service and that is what the governors of those institutions are dedicated to providing.

Prison Building

4. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of the prison building programme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Sixteen of the 21 new prisons in the Government's building programme have now opened, providing 8,000 additional places. Within the next 12 months, four of the remaining five are due to open, providing 2,250 places. In addition, this year we shall be spending nearly £200 million on improving the existing prison estate.

Mr. Devlin: I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on that wonderful answer—*[Interruption.]* It is in sharp contrast to the 20 per cent. cut in prison building under the last Labour Government. We look forward in Stockton-on-Tees to the imminent opening of Holme House Farm prison. I suggest that the police in Stockton-on-Tees, who have faced a spate of riots among drug gangs on the Ragworth estate, should be given every encouragement to apprehend all those behaving so disagracefully and to ensure that they are thrown into the new prison as soon as possible.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend may certainly congratulate me on my answers in those terms as many times as he wishes. It is true that there has been a spectacular prison building programme during the 1980s, after decades in which the prison service's needs were sadly neglected, which is why we still have so many old and unsatisfactory buildings. The new prison in Stockton opened this year and is a valuable addition to the service. I join my hon. Friend in congratulating the police on their handling of the disorders in Stockton. The disorders began when the police made arrests in an attempt to tackle a drug problem on that estate. I am sure that the police have the support of the vast majority of the inhabitants of the estate in dealing with the trouble caused by those young hooligans coming to the town.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the Home Secretary discontinue the practice—some people would say the sharp practice—pursued by his predecessor of holding up the publication of Judge Tumim's reports for so long that their criticisms are somewhat blunted? Why has he not accepted the report in respect of the young offenders institution at Feltham, which is a damning indictment?

Mr. Clarke: I refute the suggestion that Ministers have ever deliberately held back Judge Tumim's reports. My predecessor did not do so; nor have we. Delays have not been the result of ministerial decisions. I welcome Judge Tumim's reports, despite the fact that he is often outspoken in the public interest about the conditions that he finds in prisons. He describes the difficult situation in Feltham, which is being tackled by the prison authorities. Judge Tumim's reports are helpful to us in identifying problems and stimulating the efforts of the governor and his staff to deal with them.

Safer Cities

5. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many areas are now covered by the safer cities programme; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Michael Jack): In the current safer cities programme, there are 20 local authority areas selected, on the basis of high crime rates and other factors, from among the 57 urban programme areas in England. We are considering how to implement and expand the programme in the light of achievements to date.

Mr. Waterson: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that that scheme has already notched up some significant successes, with a 40 per cent. cut in burglaries on a Wolverhampton housing estate, a 35 per cent. drop in car crime in a Nottingham car park and a 16 per cent. drop in crime in the centre of Birmingham? Does he agree that that shows that the Government have the policies to combat crime?

Mr. Jack: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his correct statement on some of the notable achievements in those areas in our safer cities programme. I am sure that he will be pleased to learn that Nottingham has been a beneficiary of those achievements. The whole approach that he illuminated for the House falls within the philosophy of the safer cities programme—that of reducing the fear of crime among vulnerable groups such as the elderly, ethnic minorities and particularly women. We shall certainly develop those imaginative initiatives.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister accept that there may be people who are not yet aware of the programme? At a recent meeting in south Belfast I discovered that work had been going on but people were unaware of it. Is there not a need for greater publicity and co-ordination of efforts?

Mr. Jack: I am always delighted when hon. Members ask for information, and I can immediately produce a copy of a report dealing with the hon. Gentleman's point. I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman receives a copy of it and that copies are made available for any of his constituents who are interested in the subject.

Car Crime

6. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the contribution made by the insurance industry to car crime prevention.

Mr. Jack: The industry has responded to the problem of car crime in a number of ways, including setting up the motor insurance anti-fraud and theft register. On premium levels, some reductions have been offered where anti-theft equipment has been fitted, but that has generally been limited to new cars. I hope that the industry will do more.

Mrs. Peacock: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. I appreciate that many car crimes involve vehicles that are left open, but many more involve locked vehicles. What is my hon. Friend doing to ensure that motor manufacturers make all vehicles much more secure and to encourage insurance companies to give even bigger discounts to all motorists?

Mr. Jack: I am pleased to be able to tell my hon. Friend that many car manufacturers have woken up to the fact that the installation of security equipment as standard on many models is a major sales feature. As we approach the peak August registration period, my hon. Friend can look

forward to many advertisements recognising that fact. I am shortly to have meetings with representatives of the Association of British Insurers and shall press them to do more in respect of not only new cars but to the many millions of second-hand cars on which people can fit immobilisers and alarms. I should like the insurance companies to show greater recognition of those suggestions.

Prisoners

7. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his latest estimate of the prison population.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The prison population on Wednesday 17 June 1992 was 46,955.

Mr. Grocott: Can the Home Secretary confirm that the Council of Europe figures clearly show that the prison population in this country is the highest in western Europe and that as many as two thirds of offenders are reconvicted within two years of being sent to prison? Does he think that we have that dreadful record because the British people are uniquely delinquent or does he think, as I do, that the Government are uniquely incompetent when dealing with crime prevention, particularly reoffending?

Mr. Clarke: I am aware of the Council of Europe figures, although I always treat international comparisons with care. It is not the case that the levels of crime—for example, violent crime—in this country are particularly high when compared with other European standards, but they are quite high enough. The public require the Government to provide the courts with a full range of penalties and require people to be committed to prison where the severity of an offence justifies it. We are about to bring into effect the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to give the courts a wider range of effective penalties. The courts may decide to use non-custodial sentences in appropriate cases, where previously they may have given prison sentences.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, desirable as it no doubt is to reduce the prison population, it is absurd to expect judges to reduce the prison population by obliging them, under the Criminal Justice Act, to take no account of a man's previous convictions?

Mr. Clarke: The Criminal Justice Act tries to bring greater rationality into sentencing by setting out more clearly the matters that courts should and should not take into consideration. I have no doubt that the courts will continue to use the penalties at their disposal to the fullest effect that they think necessary to protect the public. I am sure that the Criminal Justice Act will not inhibit judges' ability to do so.

Mr. Sheerman: Is it not amazingly complacent for the Home Secretary not even to mention in his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) that, at the end of March, 11 prisons were overcrowded by 50 per cent? There are now almost 2,000 prisoners held in police cells. Is it not the Home Secretary's job to resolve the problem quickly? Will he start talking to judge Stephen Tumim and listening to his recommendations, rather than pursuing the silly policy of privatising prisons?

Mr. Clarke: I have already welcomed judge Tumim's report. An independent inspector of this kind is an added incentive to raising standards. There is still overcrowding in our prisons, but it has dropped dramatically in the past two or three years. We have somewhat reduced the capacity of our prisons by introducing a programme to get rid of slopping-out by the end of 1994. I believe that the whole House supports that. Five prisons are under construction or have been commissioned; they will add 3,000 extra places. We are producing more capacity for the prisoners and improving the regime in the prisons. We have quite a long way to go, but there has been a spectacular improvement in the past two or three years.

Vehicle Thefts

8. **Mr. Streeter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department is including motor cycle thefts and business vehicle thefts in its plans to prevent crime.

Mr. Jack: I can confirm that both motor cycles and business vehicles are included in our overall strategy to prevent vehicle crime.

Mr. Streeter: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's reply. Is he aware that the increase in the theft of motor cycles in my constituency is a problem taking up a great deal of police time and resources? Does he agree that the main responsibility for the prevention of the theft of motor cycles lies with motor cyclists themselves, by ensuring that they have taken adequate security measures?

Mr. Jack: I have much sympathy with my hon. Friend's problem in his constituency. I hope that he will be pleased to know that we in the Home Office play our part in assisting the process that he has described. In the next edition of "Practical Ways to Crack Crime" we will incorporate a section of advice on motor cycle theft. A motor cycle theft action group has been established throughout the industry to deal with the problem and I attended, under the auspices of the Institute of Motor Cycling, the launch of a new security device. Technology and practical advice are being brought to bear on this important problem.

Prison Conditions

9. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he met the chief inspector of prisons to discuss his latest report on prison conditions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary met the chief inspector for a general discussion on 30 April. I met Judge Tumim on 28 April and again on 7 May, when I attended the inspectorate's training seminar in Eastbourne.

Mr. Cox: I thank the Minister for that reply. He and his right hon. and learned Friend will be in no doubt about the continuing criticism by the chief inspector of our prisons, the conditions in which many inmates are kept and the sad increase in suicides in prison. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that it is obvious from talking to senior prison governors and prison officers that the root problem in our prisons, as today's exchanges have shown, is gross overcrowding? It is

not building new prisons that will release the tensions and solve the troubles in our prisons. When will this issue be faced up to?

Mr. Lloyd: Having spoken to the chief inspector, I am well aware that he believes that there are many excellent prisons, with good work being done in them. Contrary to what the hon. Gentleman says, the number of suicides has fallen in recent years. Any suicide is one too many, but there are fewer suicides now.

My right hon. and learned Friend referred to the building and refurbishment programmes, which are extensive. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends will resist those members of the public who object to the building of new prisons in suitable places—as they are naturally inclined to do.

Burglaries

10. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the proportion of domestic burglaries which do not involve forced entry.

Mr. Jack: The last British crime survey carried out in 1988 showed that 18 per cent. of all burglary victims interviewed said that their homes had not been left secure when they went out. However, the latest data from the Metropolitan police district showed that 29 per cent. of domestic burglaries involved no forced entry.

Mrs. Knight: Is my hon. Friend aware that some of my constituents consider that at least part of the responsibility for rising crime in Derbyshire should be taken by the county council for not funding the police properly? As such a considerable proportion of break-ins are not forced, will my hon. Friend suggest that the public help themselves by locking up properly and by joining neighbourhood watch schemes such as those that operate in Erewash?

Mr. Jack: I hope that at the county council elections the people of Derbyshire will lock the door and throw away the key on Derbyshire county council. We have heard of their misdoings for too long. But in fairness, some members of the Derbyshire police force are making their contribution to solving the problems that my hon. Friend enumerates. I pay tribute to Inspector Rosey Kiddy for her work on neighbourhood watch schemes. I commend to the House an excellent crime prevention newspaper which advertises some of the excellent work that is being done by neighbourhood watch schemes to enable individuals to protect their properties as my hon. Friend suggests.

Mr. Barnes: Will the Minister have a word with the Secretary of State for the Environment to ensure that Derbyshire county council has a decent standard spending assessment so that the services needed can be provided? The Government, not the county council, are responsible for any problems that exist in Derbyshire, which has been acting within the Government's framework.

Mr. Jack: If the hon. Gentleman will convey messages back to Derby about the effective use of resources, particularly spending up to the amount that is available to be spent on the police service, I am sure that his remarks will be listened to by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Sunday Trading

11. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received fecently about the operation of the Shops Act 1950.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: So far this year we have received 149 written representations broadly in favour of more Sunday trading and 819 against.

Mr. Marshall: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for promising to produce the Government's considered thoughts on the matter by the end of the year. Is he aware that Sunday trading is popular with the majority of shoppers, shopworkers and shopkeepers? Is it not high time that the British people were free to decide whether to shop or not to shop, to work or not to work on a Sunday?

Mr. Clarke: First, I have not promised to produce anything by the end of the year, so my hon. Friend will have to wait to see whether his thanks are premature. We are committed to bringing proposals to the House once the law has been made clear by the European Court of Justice for whose judgment we are still waiting. Then we shall obviously have to consider what to do to produce a solution that the House finds acceptable for the future. Meanwhile, I agree with my hon. Friend. Sunday shopping seems extremely popular with my constituents and is certainly not giving rise to any protests from anybody in my part of the world.

Mr. Ray Powell: The Secretary of State may not have promised to prepare anything before the end of the year, but I have prepared, with the Keep Sunday Special campaign, a Bill to change the law on Sunday trading. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman look at the Bill and give it the Government's support? It contains measures that were accepted on both sides of the House. On 22 January when I produced a similar Bill, 224 hon. Members voted in favour of it——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows better than to test my patience in that way. He should put his question.

Mr. Ray Powell: I do not wish to test your patience, Madam Speaker, but——

Madam Speaker: Order. I was not giving the hon. Gentleman pause for a second breath.

Mr. Clarke: We are awaiting the judgment of the European Court of Justice on the Shops Act 1950 to see whether that can still be enforced. It certainly seems to be the case that no one wants the Shops Act 1950 still to be in force and people are proposing variations upon it in all directions. By the time we reach the hon. Gentleman's Bill, the position will be clearer and no doubt we shall debate the matter then. But I shall be surprised if there is any proposition which has only four opponents in the House.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that there is a great deal of sympathy for the Bill being introduced by the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell)? Will he ensure that there is a proper free vote on that Bill when it comes before the House?

Mr. Clarke: As I have said, we have not yet committed ourselves to introducing any measure of our own. We have

therefore not yet taken a decision on the handling of the hon. Gentleman's Bill. However, I appreciate that views on the issue run across party lines and that strong views are held on both sides of the House. A feature of the proposed reform is that it seeks to distinguish between one type of goods and another, one type of shop and another and one type of hour of day and another. All those solutions are difficult to envisage in practice, but we shall consider them all once we have the judgment of the European Court of Justice and are clear about the present legal position.

Mr. Randall: Is the Home Secretary aware that Government incompetence has resulted in Dewhurst's having to announce the closure of 600 of its high street shops—one third of its network—because of illegal competition from certain super-stores? That has meant a serious loss of consumer choice and of jobs. As we can now expect an early decision from the European Court about the state of the Shops Act 1950, will the Home Secretary tell the House whether he is committed to introducing legislation as a matter of urgency after the decision has been announced, or whether he is going to connive with the law breakers like his predecessors?

Mr. Clarke: The Government presented a Bill that would have enabled us to reform Sunday trading. I spoke in favour of that Bill on Second Reading and voted for it, but the last Parliament threw it out on Second Reading and left the House unable to do anything about the existing state of the law. The House must address the issue and reach some clear conclusion. No one is breaking the law, because the House of Lords has decided that it is not clear what the law is. That is why the matter has been referred to the European Court of Justice; when we have a decision from the court, we shall know the basis on which we are starting.

I do not accept that any company has been closed down by the impact of Sunday trading. If the Labour party's only contribution is to undertake to protect Dewhurst from competition, I do not think that that is a very good starting point. What we need is an accepted law on Sunday trading, within which all retailers can compete on level terms.

Mr. Higgins: Should not the principle of subsidiarity apply in this case?

Mr. Clarke: Our national Parliament has not made a tremendous success of getting the law right in this regard. Of all the legislation passed by the House, the Shops Act 1950 lends itself to least defence, and we all now want to change it.

Our European commitment extends simply to ensuring that national laws do not place any impediments in the way of free trade within the Community. This country is strongly in favour of that. We shall wait to see whether the European Court decides that it extends to the Shops Act; there is a real possibility that it will say that this is a matter for the House of Commons to decide. If it says that, we shall face up to all the arguments that have just been presented.

Walton Gaol

12. **Mr. Kilfoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are currently held in Walton gaol.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Yesterday, 1,205 prisoners were being held in Her Majesty's prison, Liverpool.

Mr. Kilfoyle: Given that the prison is the largest of its kind in the country, and given the close proximity of other penal institutions across north Merseyside, how can the Minister justify proposals to build another prison a mile away at Fazakerley in my constituency, and to introduce prison ships on the River Mersey? Does he not understand that the recommendations of the Woolf report on prisons in the community did not mean that all the prisons should be built in my area?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. He has referred to other establishments. Certainly, there is an assessment centre for disturbed juveniles in the area, but that belongs to the local authority. There is a secure psychiatric hospital at Ashworth; that belongs to the national health service. Neither of those establishments belong to the prison service.

The prison at Walton is overcrowded. We do not believe in keeping prisoners in overcrowded conditions. There is no proper place for young offenders on remand, and there is a need on Merseyside. A study by the Office of Population Census and Surveys of the prison system suggested that some 1,900 prisoners had Merseyside origins; even when the prison is built at Fazakerley, there will be only 1,600 places for them in Liverpool.

Mr. Gill: Does my hon. Friend agree that the amount of interest shown in prison overcrowding during today's Question Time does not reflect the concern of our constituents? They are more concerned about the incidence of crime and its victims.

Mr. Lloyd: The supplementary question to which I am replying is not on all fours with the sentiments expressed earlier about overcrowding by the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox). We have put in a planning application and we shall see what the council says. I shall take close notice of its views.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: Given that Liverpool is already the home of Walton prison, Ashworth and Dyson hall, will the Minister accept that many of my constituents are outraged at the proposal to build a further prison at Fazakerley? Does he have plans to privatise that prison?

Mr. Lloyd: We have no current plans to privatise that prison. As I explained earlier to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle), the assessment centre belongs to the county council. It is not for prison service occupation but for disturbed juveniles who are not inside the prison system. The same applies to the psychiatric hospital. There is a need for extra prison places on Merseyside and our proposal would provide them.

Special Constabulary

13. **Mr. Hawksley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for expanding the special constabulary.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A campaign was launched last year to increase the numbers of special constables in the forces of England and Wales. Our intention is to recruit an extra 10,000 special constables and bring totals up to 25,000.

Mr. Hawksley: I thank my hon. Friend for those encouraging figures. However, it is disappointing that he does not offer any specific proposals for increased methods of recruitment. Will he consider setting up a special constabulary on the same basis as the Territorial Army?

Mr. Wardle: A three-year promotional campaign is under-way and it has started with promise. At present there are some 18,000 special constables and, in the first year of the campaign, an extra 14 per cent. growth has been seen. So the incentive is there. Comparison with the Territorial Army suggests a bounty scheme. That has been considered by the forces that have special constables and the Dorset constabulary is planning a pilot scheme.

Since my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Hawksley) mentioned special constables, I hope, Madam Speaker, that you will allow me to mention the murder 11 days ago of special constable Goodman. Mr. Goodman was one of those special constables who, like their colleagues in the regular force, put their lives at risk in the line of duty. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my noble Friend the Minister have sent their condolences to Mrs. Goodman and I know that the House will wish to join me in expressing similar sentiments to the bereaved family.

Immigration Officers

14. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the system of training immigration officers on the conduct of their duties.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Immigration officer training is designed to ensure high standards of courtesy and professionalism, and emphasises race and equal opportunities awareness and the development of inter-personal skills.

Mrs. Campbell: Will the Minister look into the case of Mr. Adol Owen-Williams of Maryland in the United States who came to this country at the time of the Los Angeles riots? He was accused, without evidence and solely because he is black, of trying to escape criminal prosecution in the United States. As a result of his questioning, he was imprisoned for two days in a cell that reeked of urine and was kept without adequate food. I should like the Minister to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of that injustice and ensure that Mr. Owen-Williams receives adequate compensation for the injustice he received.

Mr. Wardle: I must refute what the hon. Lady has said. The Owen-Williams case has been thoroughly investigated and a reply has been sent to Mr. Owen-Williams as a result of that investigation. I have seen that report. The refusal of leave to enter conformed to immigration rules and hinged largely on false information being given about his current employment status and the fact that he shipped a car and large amounts of luggage into the country. He was detained at a police station because there was evidence of previous criminal convictions in the United States. If there is anything to regret about this unhappy episode, it is that some critics who should know better have impugned the professional integrity of hard-working men and women in the immigration service without even bothering to check the facts of the case.

Mr. Brazier: Does my hon. Friend agree that the country is right to be proud of its immigration service and that there is no more important cornerstone of good race relations in this country than having a firm and fairly implemented immigration policy that prevents the fears of the indigenous majority from being reflected in the sort of ugly episodes that we have seen abroad?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He may wish to know that such matters are emphasised in immigration officers' induction training and consolidation training courses, which continue after they have been in post for between one and a half and three years. Vocational courses are also available to them.

Crime

15. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps he is considering to prevent the rising incidence of crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We shall continue to take vigorous action to tackle crime by improving the effectiveness of the criminal justice system and developing our crime prevention strategy through the involvement of the whole community in this task.

Mr. Kirkwood: Is the Minister prepared to reconsider the sentencing guidance that is given to judges? Is he aware that, under the Criminal Justice Act 1991, judges are being advised and invited to consider only two previous convictions when sentencing a convicted person? Would not it be a more effective deterrent against rising burglary and house-breaking if judges were given more flexibility in the disposal of those cases?

Mr. Jack: I listened carefully to what the hon. Member said. He will be aware that one of the new guiding principles in the Criminal Justice Act is the introduction of consultative councils, of which, I am pleased to say, the judiciary will now be part. I am sure that some of the matters that he mentioned in his question will be discussed by those bodies.

PRIME MINISTER

Official Visits

Q1. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Prime Minister when he next expects to pay an official visit to Bury.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): I shall be making further visits to many parts of the country and hope to include my hon. Friend's constituency among them.

Mr. Sumberg: Is my right hon. Friend aware that at tonight's annual general meeting of the Bury, South Conservative association we shall celebrate our recent victories in the local and general elections and welcome my right hon. Friend's recent speech on the citizens charter to the Adam Smith Institute, in which he made it absolutely clear that in the battle between the Goliaths, who want greater state intervention, and the Davids, who want greater individual freedom, he backs the Davids every time?

The Prime Minister: I wish that I could be with my hon. Friend this evening for his celebrations. The people of Bury, South made a wise choice, and they certainly did in the general election. My hon. Friend is right: I want to see a change in attitude in many areas of public services. We need public services that meet what the public want, not what the so-called experts tell them they should have.

Q2. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to pay an official visit to Woolwich.

The Prime Minister: I will be making further visits to many parts of the country and hope to include different parts of London among them.

Mr. Austin-Walker: Does the Prime Minister share the enthusiasm of the President of the Board of Trade for the economic regeneration of the east Thames corridor? Does he share the views of previous Secretaries of State for Transport that the Jubilee line is essential for that economic regeneration and that it can be achieved at far less cost to the Exchequer than building the east London river crossing and without the environmental damage that would ensue from the road?

The Prime Minister: I hope that in due course we shall be able to proceed with the Jubilee line, but we shall wish to see the private sector contribution that we previously set as the sum necessary to ensure that we can proceed. Providing we can achieve that, I hope that we will be able to proceed with the Jubilee line. Economic regeneration is welcome everywhere.

Engagements

Q3. **Sir Anthony Durant:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 18 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Sir Anthony Durant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the reduction in nuclear weapons that was agreed between President Bush and the Russian President is good news and is to be welcomed? However, will he assure the House and the nation that he will maintain strong United Kingdom defences within NATO and will continue with the Trident programme?

The Prime Minister: I warmly welcome the announcements that were made after the meetings in Washington between President Bush and President Yeltsin. We shall certainly continue to maintain our own independent nuclear deterrent. We shall maintain it, build it, arm it and deploy Trident.

Mr. Kinnock: On this day on which unemployment has gone above 2·7 million again, does the Prime Minister recall that it is exactly a year since he said that economic recovery would begin—and I use his words—"within weeks" and that Britain would come out of recession by the end of 1991? Why was he so absurdly wrong?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman will have been very pleased to see the economic indicators this week in the light of that remark—very pleased indeed. He will have been pleased to see that manufacturing production has risen for three months in a row for the first time in two years, that retail sales are up again, that the rate of increase in average earnings has slowed further to 7 per cent. and is now at its lowest level for 25 years. While the increase in unemployment is very unwelcome, it is clearly now slowing, so I think that the right hon. Gentleman can now see that we are on the road to recovery.

Mr. Kinnock: I am always glad to see any movement out of the trough into which this Government's policies have pushed the British people and the British economy, but, after the Chancellor's statement yesterday that Britain is three years away from full recovery, as he put it, is not it clear that whenever the Prime Minister or the Chancellor have made optimistic comments about the economy, they have simply not been telling the truth to the British people?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman should not be misled by everything that he reads in newspaper headlines; he should read the speech itself. He should recall that in January he relied a touch too heavily on a press report and criticised me when he was confusing taxes and interest rates. The reality was that what my right hon. Friend actually said yesterday was:

> "In two or three years' time . . . people will look back and see that it was now, at this critical juncture, that the right decision was taken."

He did not say that it would be two or three years before recovery.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister giving us a date for recovery? He used to be very anxious so to do. I remind him that this time last year he said that it would start "within weeks". This time last year he said that there would be recovery by the end of the year. Why is he much more coy now, a year later, in giving us a firm forecast on when Britain can rejoin the countries that enjoy some growth, since we have now had two years with negative growth under his Government?

The Prime Minister: I think that the right hon. Gentleman should now know that we are on our way to recovery, and if the right hon. Gentleman wishes to know perhaps why the recovery was later than it might have been, I quote the words of the general secretary of the Labour party who claimed that the Labour party did not win the election because of the

> "fear of high tax, plus general unease about [Labour's] economic competence."

That did no good at all while the right hon. Gentleman was boasting that he would be sitting on this side of the Chamber.

Mr. Renton: While I hope that the Irish people will reach a positive conclusion in their referendum today, does my right hon. Friend agree that the holding of referendums on major constitutional issues runs contrary to the practice of parliamentary sovereignty in this country and that further, it would be impossible to boil down the many complex issues of the 134-page treaty of Maastricht into one short, but fair and comprehensive question? Further, has the Prime Minister noted——

Madam Speaker: Order. One question.

Mr. Renton: —the recent twists and turns on the European issue by the Labour leader?

Madam Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman is being very unfair in putting so many questions in a short space of time. I call the Prime Minister to answer the first two.

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend's comments on the subject of referendums. I believe that he states the classical position concerning parliamentary democracy.

Q4. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 18 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Fyfe: As the Prime Minister says no to a devolved Scottish Parliament, against the wishes of the majority of the Scottish people, and also says no to a referendum on how Scotland should be governed, will he tell us to what, after 10 weeks of taking stock, he is prepared to say yes?

The Prime Minister: I shall tell the hon. Lady when we have concluded taking stock.

Q5. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 18 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evennett: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his excellent speech to the Adam Smith Institute, in which he advocated more choice and opportunity for the less privileged in our society. Does he agree that we have a lot to do for our inner cities—and in particular that we must ensure that standards in inner-city schools are raised?

The Prime Minister: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend about that. We are determined to raise standards in all our schools, and especially to deal with the problem that clearly exists in many of our inner-cities. I believe that school governors and education authorities must act quickly where inspectors' reports show that standards are unacceptably low. That is too often the case in many of our inner-city schools, and the Government do not intend to stand idly by and see it continue.

Mr. Ashdown: What will the Prime Minister do about unemployment, which is now rising inexorably towards 3 million? It is now two months since the election, and only a handful of weeks until school leavers come on to the register. Are the Government so consumed by self-satisfaction and so sunk in lethargy that they offer no hope, no policies and no action for those who are losing their jobs?

The Prime Minister: I am in no sense satisfied with the level of unemployment in this country, and I have made that clear before. We need the right sort of economic policy, which will sustain long-term employment prospects; that is what we are putting into place and we shall ensure that we achieve it.

When the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) asks for action he means short-term subsidy —that is what he is really asking for. His only answer is to subsidise the inefficient, the uneconomic and the out of date. No wonder the Liberal Democrats have so much in common with the official Opposition.

Q6. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 18 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Michael Neubert: Is the Prime Minister aware that a distinguished predecesor and former Minister for administrative affairs—Mr. Jim Hacker—reaches pensionable age today? In the spirit of that great statesman, I, too, welcome the Prime Minister's speech to the Adam Smith Institute this week. I also ask my right hon. Friend to urge his colleagues at tomorrow's citizens charter seminar at No. 10 to press forward with further improvements to our public services. In particular, will he tell us whether we can expect the publication of a courts charter, to deal with the interminable delays to which so much of our law is subject?

The Prime Minister: Yes, my hon. Friend touches an important matter, which causes frustration for many of our fellow citizens. We are proceeding to produce a courts charter and I hope that we shall be able to make announcements about it before too long.

Libya (Sanctions)

Q7. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on representations from Arab countries about sanctions against Libya.

The Prime Minister: We have had various approaches from Arab countries about sanctions against Libya. We and the Arab League share the same objective—to see a satisfactory outcome to the Lockerbie problem. This, as the Arab League well knows, will require Libya's full compliance with United Nations Security Council resolution 731.

Mr. Dalyell: In the light of my two letters to the Prime Minister on this subject, will he consider putting in the Library a response to the cover story of *Time* magazine —not exactly a publication of the left—which challenges the whole basis of the Anglo-American position? Will the right hon. Gentleman also consider approaching Spain on the legal proceedings relating to Monzer al Kassar, a Syrian drugs and arms dealer?

The Prime Minister: I saw the article in *Time* magazine; I examined it and sought advice on it. The theories about involvement and links with drugs are not new. They were thoroughly examined by the police during the investigation and were discounted at that stage, at the conclusion of the investigation. No evidence has yet been found to link the Syrian, al Kassar, to Lockerbie—but I shall, of course, examine the matter again in view of the hon. Gentleman's representations.

Mr. Wilkinson: Can my right hon. Friend enlighten the House about any dealings between Government officials and the Government of Libya over links between the Libyan regime and the Irish Republican Army? Has the IRA received any supplies from Libya recently? Have the Libyan authorities given assurances to the Government that they will not continue to supply the IRA?

The Prime Minister: The Libyans have provided some information to the Government about their relationships with the IRA; they did so in Geneva on 9 June. The

preliminary assessment of that information suggests that although in places it was incomplete and unsatisfactory, it contains some positive elements which may well prove useful. One positive development is the fact that the Libyans have indicated to us that they wish to cease providing assistance to the IRA. We are not convinced that that is yet the case.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 22 JUNE—Progress in Committee on the Boundary Commissions Bill.

TUESDAY 23 JUNE—Until about seven o'clock, completion in Committee of the Boundary Commissions Bill.

Proceedings on the Protection of Badgers Bill *[Lords]*, Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Bill *[Lords]*, and the Tribunals and Inquiries Bill *[Lords]*, all of which are consolidation measures.

Motions on the Criminal Law orders. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Debate on reports from the Select Committee on Members' Interests (House of Commons Papers Nos. 108 and 326) on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

WEDNESDAY 24 JUNE—Until about seven o'clock, motions on the special grant reports for England and Wales. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the Charge Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order.

THURSDAY 25 JUNE—Debate on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 26 JUNE—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 29 JUNE—Remaining stages of British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee A will meet at 10.30 am on Wednesday 24 June to consider European Community Document No. 7857/91 relating to vehicle noise.

There is one further piece of intelligence, possibly rather more welcome, which I can communicate to the House. The House will wish to know that, subject to the progress of business, it is proposed that the House should rise for the summer Adjournment on Thursday 16 July until Monday 19 October. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House should not get too excited about that last item of information.

[Tuesday 23 June:

Criminal Law Orders

(a) Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 (Designated Countries and Territories) (Amendment) Order

(b) Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990 (Enforcement of Overseas Forfeiture Orders) (Amendment) Order

Wednesday 24 June:

Special Grant Reports

(a) Special Grant Report (No. 4) 1992-93

(b) Special Grant Report (Wales) 1992

European Standing Committee A

Relevant European Community Document

7857/91 Vehicle Noise

Relevant Reports of the European Legislation Committee

HC 29-xxx (1990-91) and HC 24-v (1991-92).]

Dr. Cunningham: The welcome for the right hon. Gentleman's announcement of the summer recess is evident. Would it not have been better if that announcement had been made in the context of a debate in the House on the proposals in the Jopling report? May I again urge the Leader of the House to find time for a debate on that important report before we reach the summer Adjournment?

May I welcome the Government's announcement and the decision by the Leader of the House to find time for a debate on the important Rio summit? However, I express regret that the debate will take place on a motion for the Adjournment of the House and not on a substantive motion setting out the Government's detailed ideas and proposals on how they will implement the general agreement reached at the Earth summit in Rio.

I strongly urge the Leader of the House to find Government time for a debate on the appalling level of unemployment. Is it not a daunting—indeed, dismaying—prospect for young people leaving schools, universities and colleges this summer who face such difficulties in finding employment? May we have a debate? May we have a statement at that time about what new ideas, policies or initiatives, if any, the Government intend to take as a matter of urgency to tackle the inexorable and appalling rise in unemployment?

Mr. Newton: First, I welcome the hon. Gentleman's comments about the recess dates. Obviously, I note what he said about the wider proposals of the Jopling report. Although a debate is not scheduled for next week, it is our firm intention to provide time for a debate on the report before the House rises on 16 July.

On the Rio summit, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made it clear on many occasions that the wide-ranging discussions at Rio were part of a continuing process rather than something that is implemented at one time. The nature of the summit, the problem and the on-going action and consideration that will be required in Britain and elsewhere makes it more appropriate to have a wide-ranging debate on the Adjournment than to attempt to devise a motion along the lines that the hon. Gentleman suggested.

On the unemployment figures, there will obviously be several occasions, not least the various Adjournment debates and other occasions during the next few weeks, on which it will be possible to debate the unemployment figures. However, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not overplay his hand. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in response to questions this afternoon, the figures this month seem to confirm a slowing down of an albeit unwelcome rise in unemployment. As for initiatives, the hon. Gentleman will no doubt have registered the fact that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has announced today a significantly higher new target for the Employment Service for placing people in new jobs in the coming year.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is growing anxiety about the delay in establishing the departmental Select Committees? As there is even less time before the recess than we expected, it is important that they should be set up so that they can appoint advisers and determine their programmes, and so that the Clerks can begin their work. Although there may be particular points which give cause for further

[Mr. Terence L. Higgins]

negotiation on certain Committees, there is no reason why most of the Committees should not be set up in the next two weeks.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend is aware of the endeavours that I am making in this respect. The discussions are taking place through the usual channels. One of the debates that I have announced this week, on which I have been pressed from both below and above the Gangway—the debate on Members' interests in relation to Select Committees—is a further step in paving the way to setting up the Select Committees.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): May we have a Government statement as soon as possible on the announcement this afternoon that Yorkshire Television is to take over Tyne Tees Television by agreement with Tyne Tees Television? Does the Leader of the House recall that, in debates on the Broadcasting Bill, the Minister was pressed from this Bench many times on possible takeovers of smaller regional companies? Should not the House now be told why the responses and assurances given at that time have been shown to be of no value?

Mr. Newton: Of course, I shall make sure that the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage, who is responsible for these matters, is drawn at once to the hon. Gentleman's remarks. However, he is aware that the Broadcasting Act 1987 makes provision for mergers and takeovers with the approval of the Independent Television Commission. I understand that the commission will continue to enforce the original licence conditions.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As a gesture to show our appreciation to the voters of Denmark for bringing about a longer summer break, will the Leader of the House arrange a debate next week on how the British Government can let the voters of Britain know what is in the Maastricht treaty?

Mr. Newton: I cannot undertake to publish a substantial additional document between now and next week. As I believe was fairly commonplace in what might be called gossip around the place at earlier times, it has persistently been the Government's wish and hope to get the House up in the middle of July, in line with one of the Jopling report's recommendations.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Will the Leader of the House send the sincerest apologies of the House to the Government and people of Sweden for the crass behaviour there this week, of vandals who represent only 3 per cent. of football supporters in this country? Will he approach the president of the Union of European Football Associations, perhaps through the diplomatic channels, and ask it not to ban clubs such as Sheffield Wednesday —my club—Manchester United and Leeds United from playing in Europe next season, because there supporters and players have committed no crime and it would be unfair to punish them in that way?

Mr. Newton: I shall ensure that the attention of UEFA is drawn to the hon. Gentleman's remarks. On his first question, I am in the happy position of being able simply to say yes.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Members have received correspondence from the Minister for Housing and Planning about the planning inspectorate agency, informing us that the answers to questions normally published in *Hansard* will instead be put in the Library. Will the Leader of the House consider publishing daily, as an appendix to *Hansard*, questions asked by Members so that there is some record of what they are asking the planning inspectorate?

Mr. Newton: That issue arose on several occasions during the last Parliament as the executive agencies were being set up. I think that my hon. Friend understands the position. The Government wish to improve access to the letters answering such questions in some circumstances, and have put proposals for their publication to the House authorities. Now that the House Committees have been reconstituted, I hope that it will be possible for an early decision to be taken.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Now we know that we are to have an even earlier summer recess, will the Leader of the House tell us when we can debate the vexed matter of research and secretarial allowances? It is a crucial issue and we need to debate it because too many people outside the House seem to believe that research and secretarial allowances are an addition to Members' pay. I had to pay back an additional £5,000 to the Fees Office last year because of excess demands upon my office. We need a debate before the summer recess.

Mr. Newton: I agree that we need such a debate before the summer recess and it is my intention that there should be one, but I cannot give an exact date.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Does my right hon. Friend agree that we are still a seafaring nation? I have been asking for some time for a debate on shipping and ports policy, possibly attached to a debate on transport infrastructure. The problem is being studied by three or four different Departments and it would be useful to have a debate in the House to bring it all together.

Mr. Newton: I appreciate my hon. Friend's long interest in such matters in the House, and I note his request. I would not wish to excite hopes of being able to accommodate his wish before the summer recess, but I shall certainly bear it in mind.

Ms. Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley): Will the Minister find time next week for at least a statement on the rights of parents of children with special needs to choose the school that their child attends? Will he include in his statement a response to the representations that I have made on behalf of my constituents, Mr. and Mrs. McNerlin, about their nine-year-old autistic son Daniel, who has not been to school for 16 months as a result of a difference of opinion between his parents and the local authority?

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Lady's reference to the case, which will no doubt be examined by those responsible. On the general issue, she will be aware, I am sure, that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education is working on some education proposals. I shall ensure that his attention is drawn to the matter about which the hon. Lady has expressed concern.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): During Home Office questions today my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department paid tribute to Special Constable Glenn Goodman of the North Yorkshire police. May we have a debate soon on the police service? In recent weeks the Home Secretary has made important speeches about policing policy to the Association of Chief Police Officers conference and before that to the Police Federation. Does not my right hon. Friend share my concern that the arrangements about payment of a pension to Constable Goodman's widow are in some doubt? Is that not a matter that the House should consider?

Mr. Newton: I echo the earlier remarks made by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department. My hon. Friend will appreciate that, while I acknowledge his legitimate concern about the matter, I cannot promise a debate. However, I shall bear his request in mind.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Leader of the House find time for an urgent debate on the housing crisis? Is he aware that, this week, my local authority found that it had no bed-and-breakfast or hostel accommodation for the elderly and had to appeal to the citizens of Halifax to take in the homeless? Is he further aware that the Federation of Housing Associations published a report this week stating that it could no longer build affordable homes, which is all due to the Government's housing policies? Is it not time that we spared just one day for a debate on the homeless to show that we really care?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps I should observe that the Opposition had a Supply day this week and it would have been open to them to raise that subject if they had wished to do so. However, as I said in reply to the request from the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) for a debate on unemployment, it will be possible to raise various matters in what remains of the Session before the summer recess. The Government are concerned to make some improvements to housing policy, and that was manifest by out commitment in the Queen's Speech to introduce the Housing Land and Urban Development Bill. That will certainly provide the hon. Lady with many opportunities to discuss housing later in the year.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): In the aftermath of the events in Sweden, in which the sub-humans who call themselves football supporters dragged England's name through the mud, may we have a debate on civil liberties? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if we do not interfere with the civil liberties of that mindless minority, it will damage the civil liberties of us all?

Mr. Newton: I need not go so far as to promise a debate in the terms sought by my hon. Friend. However, he will probably be aware that we have reached an agreement with the Swedish Government whereby English supporters who are convicted of football-related offences in Sweden may be made the subject of restriction orders. That would prevent them from causing further trouble at overseas matches, which is something that the whole House wants to ensure.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): May I press the right hon. Gentleman on his reply to the hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) on the safety of vessels? He will be aware of the Select Committee report from another place that dealt with that matter. Will the House be able to consider that report in order to give us some idea of the Government's position in relation to it?

Mr. Newton: I have enough difficulty from time to time in accommodating the desire to debate the Select Committee reports of this House without entering into a commitment to debate Select Committee reports from another place. The hon. Gentleman can press me further and, clearly, he intends to do so. However, I cannot promise any more than I did to my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill).

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Will it be possible to have a debate soon on the problems caused by travellers? Many Conservative Members have commented in meetings at which I have been present about the widespread problems that are caused by travellers. The problems are caused not by the traditional romany but by Johnny-come-latelies, who park anywhere, take no notice of people's property and have no respect for the law or anything else. We need a debate, and some action to tighten up the legislation.

Mr. Newton: That subject has been raised on several occasions during business questions in the past few weeks. Although I cannot add to what I have said before, I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the fact that our hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) is to initiate an Adjournment debate on Monday 29 June under the heading "Camping by travellers".

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, instead of packing up and going on holiday on 16 July, we should debate next week, and extend the other business into the holiday period, the question of opencast mining? Several early-day motions appear on the Order Paper relating to opencasting in many constituencies. Is he further aware that opencast production has more than doubled in recent years? Does he appreciate the need to withdraw a circular that was issued in 1984 which enables opencast mining to occur not on the basis of planning conditions but in relation to whether the coal is needed? As we do not need coal through opencasting—because we have plenty of deep-mined coal—let us debate the whole subject, including that planning arrangement, so that the circular can be withdrawn and we can reduce the amount of opencast mining that is blighting countless constituencies in Britain.

Mr. Newton: Without endorsing everything that the hon. Gentleman said, I am aware that there is concern among hon. Members on both sides of the House who represent coalmining areas about some aspects of the matter. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the House will be debating legislation concerned with coal this Session, so I am sure that there will be a number of opportunities to raise the issue.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Will my right hon. Friend find time to debate whether the Secretary of State for Health should kindly provide skilled counselling or other help for Labour Members who seem to be slating

[Mr. Toby Jessel]

one another on their election tactics when what they really need to do is come to terms with the fact that the British people just do not want a Labour Government?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend may think that that is a good subject for a Supply day debate, but I had better leave the Opposition to make their own decision on that.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will it be possible for the Secretary of State for Social Security to make a statement early next week on whether a formal application will be made by the British authorities to ensure that any funds owned by the Maxwell foundation are returned to this country to be used for the pensioners who were swindled? Is he aware that, when we went to the Swiss embassy yesterday, my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) and I made that point strongly and were told that no formal application had yet been made? Perhaps we could have a statement about that.

Mr. Newton: I will draw that request to the attention of my right hon. Friend. The hon. Gentleman will be aware of what has been reported from those concerned with some of the funds allegedly held in Liechtenstein, and he has probably welcomed some of the comments made in recent days about that. I am sure that the unit that my right hon. Friend has set up will do everything possible to assist in any way, whether in Liechtenstein or elsewhere, to ensure the maximum possible recovery of funds for the Maxwell pensioners.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there are many matters of current concern—from the situation in Yugoslavia to the activities of certain sections of the press—which could, and probably should, be the subject of Select Committee inquiries? May we have a definite assurance that before the House rises the Select Committees monitoring the work of all Departments will be established?

Mr. Newton: I cannot add to what were intended to be as helpful as possible remarks that I made on the subject earlier. In view of the well-known fact that there must be extensive discussions on those matters, I cannot give my hon. Friend the definite assurance he is seeking, but I assure him that I shall continue to use my best endeavours to make progress along those lines.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): In view of the right hon. Gentleman's responsibilities to the House, may I ask him to look soon at the question of the future leadership of the Council of Europe delegation? Does he agree——

Madam Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that we are dealing with the business for next week. Perhaps he will rephrase his question so as to make it acceptable.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Leader of the House do it next week? Will he, in the coming few days, consider whether it is desirable to ensure that the democratic factor is not overlooked and the fact that it would not be desirable, although it might be unavoidable, for some Opposition Members to lodge an objection to the British credentials should an unfortunate decision be made?

Mr. Newton: I know that the hon. Gentleman raised that matter in the Council of Europe a few months ago, and I followed his comments carefully and what happened afterwards. I can do no more this afternoon than note what he has said.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Will my right hon. Friend ask the Secretary of State for Transport to make an early statement to the House about the safety of electrically operated car windows? That would provide an opportunity for us to find out what motor manufacturers are urgently doing to increase the safety of such windows, particularly by applying sensors. My right hon. Friend may care to know that the recent tragedy of Lucinda Richardson occurred to a family in my constituency.

Mr. Newton: In the light of my hon. Friend's final point, may I, on behalf of the whole House, join in the sympathy expressed by many people to the parents of the child killed in that tragic accident? I shall certainly draw my right hon. Friend's attention to my hon. Friend's request.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Next week, or before the House adjourns for the summer, will the Home Secretary or the Attorney-General make a statement about the fate of Sir John May's inquiry into the miscarriage of justice in the Guildford and Woolwich cases? It is now two years and 10 months since that inquiry was set up in an atmosphere of some urgency and the Home Secretary make a statement to the House, but Sir John May has not yet commenced the main part of his inquiry. There is a widespread view that he will never be permitted to do so because of where the trail of responsibility leads.

Mr. Newton: I recall the hon. Gentleman raising that matter in the Whitsun Adjournment debate, when I ran out of time and could not comment on it. As I told him informally afterwards, I have drawn his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend. I shall do so again in the expectation that my right hon. Friend will wish to respond to him in an appropriate way.

Sir Michael Neubert (Romford): Will my right hon. Friend find time next week to debate London's docklands and the project to extend the Jubilee line? Is he aware that Canary wharf accounts for only some 150 acres out of 5,500 acres in docklands, and that the Jubilee line is needed to help to revitalise south as well as east London and is of major importance to the future of our capital city?

Mr. Newton: I note what my hon. Friend has said, but he would not expect me to add to the answer given a few moments ago by the Prime Minister and, a day or two ago, by the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): Is the Leader of the House aware that, whatever good wishes the House may wish to extend to the people of Denmark, leaving early for the summer recess is not one of them? I speak for all my hon. Friends when I say that we have come here to do a job and would like to continue working to a later date. Will he make a statement next week, having thought again about that date for closing down? The Government should recognise that they gave an obligation to legislate on ticket touting and, since January 1990, they have been saying that when parliamentary time allows they will

legislate on it. On 16 May, the Prime Minister said the same. We now have time to do so, so will the Leader of the House consider it?

Mr. Newton: I note the request and, with some amazement, the fact that this must be the first time that any Leader of the House, having announced the dates for a recess, has been confronted with a demand that it be delayed.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): May I revert to the question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) on traveller families? As my right hon. Friend knows, many of our constituents are fearful that they face another summer with wave upon wave of traveller families attacking our communities, with no protection from or application of the law. May we please have a debate on the matter before the House rises?

Mr. Newton: I cannot give the undertaking precisely in the terms for which my hon. Friend asks, but he will be aware of the concern expressed following the incidents that occurred in the west country a few weeks ago. The lessons of that will, as far as possible, be learned by police forces throughout the country, and that may be at least as effective as seeking to make hasty changes in legislation.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): In the light of earlier comments to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition about unemployment and comments earlier this week on the Rio summit, will the Leader of the House ask the President of the Board of Trade and the Department of the Environment to address the House next week on the fact that 108 people have been dismissed from the Kemira factory, which manufactures fertilisers, in my constituency? It is suffering drastically from eastern European dumping in circumstances that would be untenable in this country and in environmental conditions that we would not tolerate.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will have noticed that next Thursday there is to be a wide-ranging debate on environmental matters arising out of the Rio summit. It struck me as he was asking his question that it would require only a modest amount of ingenuity to work his point into that debate.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Further to the questions of my hon. Friends the Members for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) and for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), will my right hon. Friend reconsider his position on gipsies? Does he agree that the problems of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 are at the root of the difficulty? Is he aware that my constituency has the biggest problem in the county of Leicestershire? Some farmers in my constituency have been told by illegal travellers that they will have their ricks and barns burnt if they do not let them reside on their land.

Mr. Newton: I deplore any behaviour of the sort outlined in my hon. Friend's latter remarks. Three of my hon. Friends have now expressed concern, which I am sure is widely shared, about the issue. I shall draw that fact to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May we have a statement next week on the Leeds-Bradford electrification scheme for which, as the Leader of the House may be aware, authority has been granted for overhead electrical equipment but not for rolling stock? The Government are recommending leasing, but the Industrial Bank of Scotland is refusing to go ahead on the present terms as it is unhappy about the proposed privatisation and does not believe in the marketplace when it can operate against its interests. That is placing the scheme in jeopardy. We need a statement from the Secretary of State for Transport to clarify the position on the much-needed scheme as the commuter services between Leeds and Bradford are heavily used. If the scheme does not go ahead, 200 jobs in Leeds will be lost.

Mr. Newton: In my statement, I referred to a debate next week on the remaining stages of the British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill, and only a modest amount of ingenuity would be required for the hon. Gentleman to raise his question during that debate.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Will my right hon. Friend give the House an opportunity to debate the European Union (Public Information) Bill? If the British electorate are not to be given an opportunity to express their views in a referendum, the Government should at least give them the opportunity of knowing what their Members of Parliament will decide on their behalf in light of the profound and fundamental constitutional issues at stake in any treaty of union.

Mr. Newton: Having urged the exercise of ingenuity on other hon. Members, I pay tribute to my hon. Friend's ingenuity in finding a way of raising an issue about which he is anxious. However, I do not think I can promise time to debate that Bill next week.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is the second time that I have been called this Parliament, and I am delighted and grateful.

In view of recent events, in view of the fact that the Press Commission under Lord McGregor of Durris, with its self-regulatory code, is proving less efficient than its predecessor the Press Council, and in view of the fact that the trial term of the Press Commission is about to finish, may we have a debate next week on the necessity for proper regulation of the conduct of the popular press in this country?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage is about to embark on a review of the Press Commission, which is coming to the end of its trial period. I am sure that in his review my right hon. and learned Friend will wish to take into account the concerns expressed by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a full debate on the arts, certainly before the summer recess, so that the excellent new National Heritage Department can set out its arts strategy? Another reason for a debate is that the Arts Council has recently published a consultative paper on its strategy, comments on which must be returned by July. I think that my right hon. Friend would agree that the House should have a say in that consultation process.

Mr. Newton: I share my hon. Friend's view of the importance of these matters, but he would be surprised if I were to respond in exactly the way that he invites me to do. I want first to make sure that I have time for debates on the Jopling report and office costs.

Ms. Liz Lynne (Rochdale): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 266?

[That this House, noting that the profits of the electricity supplier Norweb have risen by 96 per cent. in the last year, calls on the company to issue a clear statement as to how the £138 million profit is to be invested; notes that all the regional electricity companies are overcharging their customers; and urges that some of Norweb's £138 million profit makes its way back to the consumers through reduced prices.]

Will he find time next week for an urgent debate on the profits of all the privatised utilities?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady would be surprised if I were to respond quite as she requests me to. I merely observe that I sometimes wonder about the complaints that I hear to the effect that many industries which for long periods performed extremely badly and invested far too little are now far more successful and are investing large sums in providing much better services for their consumers.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Will my right hon. Friend initiate an early debate on law and order, especially to emphasise what happens to offenders who are on bail, on parole or on home release from prison, and the problems of ensuring that those who have left prison do not reoffend? Chief police officers are keen that those whom their officers arrest should not immediately return to the streets to offend again before they even come to court.

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise an early debate on that, although I well understand my hon. Friend's concern and will draw it to the attention of the Home Secretary.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an urgent statement to be made by the Government on the proposed halving of the number of Customs officials engaged in anti-smuggling activities at Birmingham and Coventry airports—cuts which could open the west midlands to the easier importation of drugs, pornography and terrorism? Can the statement be made in the light of the Prime Minister's recent commitment to maintaining effective border controls—a commitment which will have a shamefully hollow ring if the cuts take place?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman acknowledges by implication the determination that the British Government have expressed on a number of occasions to ensure the continued effectiveness of controls to prevent, for instance, drug offences. I also note the hon. Gentleman's suggestion.

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): I know that the Leader of the House will not be aware of the details, but recently the Department of Transport sanctioned the closure of the driving test centre in Rutherglen without giving notice to the public or me. Bearing in mind the Prime Minister's support for the citizens charter, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to come to the House next week to make a statement that matches the ideals of the citizens charter against the behaviour of the Department of Transport?

Mr. Newton: I must acknowledge that the hon. Gentleman is right to think that news of the closure of the driving test centre at Rutherglen had not yet reached the Privy Council Office or that of the Leader of the House, but I will ensure that the news reaches the office of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): The right hon. Gentleman will have heard the Prime Minister state that the Government continue to take stock of the Scottish situation that resulted from the general election. What is the apparatus within the Government for the stocktaking? When will it be completed? And may we have a debate on the future of the government of Scotland?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman obviously heard what the Prime Minister said at Prime Minister's questions. I intend to take the cautious line of adding nothing to it.

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): As it appears that the Home Office is reviewing the rules and procedures for dealing with entry clearance appeals on cases refused under the primary-purpose rule, and that such cases are not being listed for appeal, will the Leader of the House ask the Home Secretary to make a statement to the House on the exact purpose and, in due course, the outcome of that review? It appears that it is connected with a case before the European Court on which judgment is expected in late July, so may we have a statement before the House rises for the summer recess so that changes on this important matter are not made at a time when the House is in recess?

Mr. Newton: I am beginning to feel, as on one previous such occasion, that I am being asked questions that hon. Members were unable to ask during Home Office questions earlier. However, I shall draw that question to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): Will the Leader of the House acknowledge that many hon. Members representing constituents who are facing acute difficulties during the summer while the recession continues and unemployment continues to rise do not share the satisfaction evident on the Government Benches at the unduly long summer recess? Will it not be the longest recess of modern times, and does not that suggest that the Government are running out of steam in their first year?

Mr. Newton: Anyone who believes that will believe anything.

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): Will the Leader of the House read early-day motion 201?

[That this House calls upon the Government to support Article 89 of the European Parliament resolution on a Community tourism policy by instigating a scheme of compensation for tourists who are not only victims of crime but who have suffered bodily harm as a result of a criminal act; and believes such compensation should be set at a European average level with an addition for any legal costs that may be necessary.]

It calls upon the Government to support moves in the European Parliament to introduce a compensation scheme for the victims of crime and those who have suffered actual bodily harm as a criminal act which should be paid at European level with additional payments for any legal costs incurred. Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement next week to explain why Britain is opposing such moves in the Council of Ministers?

Mr. Newton: I understand that Britain already has probably the most generous criminal injuries compensation scheme anywhere. More than 60,000 claims were resolved in 1991-92 and the better part of £150 million was paid in compensation. Therefore, I am not prepared to accept too many strictures on the Government's record in that respect.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Madam Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the four motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

COAL INDUSTRY

That the draft Coal Industry (Restructuring Grants) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

PARALYTIC SHELLFISH POISONING

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 1387) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Amendment) Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND)

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Question agreed to.

Northern Ireland Act 1974

4.11 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I beg to move,

That the draft Northern Ireland Act 1974 (Interim Period Extension) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 2nd June, be approved.

The draft order renews the temporary provisions in the Northern Ireland Act 1974, under which government by direct rule continues in Northern Ireland. I accordingly owe it to the House to give an account, obviously curtailed, of the Government's stewardship in Northern Ireland during the past year. In particular, I shall describe how, through talks with and between the four main constitutional parties, we have advanced our search for alternative political structures, just and durable in character, by which Northern Ireland may in future with general acceptance be governed.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): I apologise for interrupting the Secretary of State so early in his speech, but does he agree that those of us who have been involved in the talks have a responsibility to preserve the degree of confidentiality which has been so valuable thus far? For that reason, I do not intend to contribute to the debate. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman also support my word of caution to the news industry, particularly the London heavies which persist in publishing reports which will destroy their credibility when they are contradicted by the facts?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I warmly agree with the right hon. Gentleman about the importance of confidentiality. We have gained greatly from the extent to which the undertakings that all gave have been complied with. It is of great importance, at what is a particularly sensitive time in the process, that discussions take place within the privacy of the meetings themselves and are not conducted or supplemented in public. As to the second part of the right hon. Gentleman's question, what he said speaks for itself.

What is our purpose in Northern Ireland? It is primarily to help the people of Northern Ireland themselves to secure a tranquil, just and prosperous way of life. Its people remain divided as a community, but I sense that increasingly there is manifested by ordinary people from each side a deep desire to see co-operation taking place to secure that aim. It is the Government's desire to foster that, because the people of Northern Ireland reside in what is part of the United Kingdom; not simply by virtue of the cartographer's pen but by the will of a majority of them. They have and will continue to have from us the constitutional guarantee whose terms are very familiar to the House. We owe them that responsibility to help, just as we owe it to the peoples of England, Wales and Scotland.

The Government are in no doubt that the present arrangements for dealing with Northern Ireland's affairs must remain in place for the time being; but they are very long in the tooth—much longer in the tooth than is becoming for arrangements that were intended from the outset to be interim. We want the indignity that is inherent in those arrangements to be lifted from Northern Ireland as soon as is practicable.

Political talent abounds in the Province. That talent has been and remains eager to shoulder greater responsibilities

[Sir Patrick Mayhew]

of government within Northern Ireland, but there are complex and often conflicting interests to be accommodated—hence the Government's determination to do all in their power to help the participants in the talks to reach agreement. In the meantime, the Government will continue to do the job entrusted to them by Parliament with unflagging commitment to the people of the Province.

Let me explain how we have discharged our responsibility. Last week, the House had an opportunity to discuss security, which it did—properly and valuably—at some length. I do not propose, therefore, to detain the House long on the subject today, crucial though it is.

Over the past year, the campaign of violence by terrorists on both sides of the community has been maintained. When I opened Wednesday's debate, I illustrated the toll that had been exacted. Little is to be gained from rhetoric, for revulsion speaks for itself; nor is much to be gained from criticism that is confined to generalities rather than dealing with particulars. What is required is the resolute application of properly thought out, clearly formulated and co-ordinated policies, within the unbending discipline that is imposed on us by the rule of law. There has been, and there will be, no acceptable level of violence.

Our first priority has been to work towards the permanent elimination of terrorist crime. The Royal Ulster Constabulary, with the support of the armed forces, has operated to that end with courage and skill, and with the high degree of success that I described last week. Those forces will continue to need and receive our fullest support.

As I know the House recognises, to be fully effective security policies must be complemented by active social and economic policies: certainly that is the Government's view. The performance of the Northern Ireland economy is central to those policies. During the 1980s, Northern Ireland's rate of economic growth broadly matched the rate achieved nationally, but ever since then the local economy has been adversely affected by the worldwide recession.

None the less, the Province's economic performance has proved remarkably resilient in the circumstances. Regrettably, unemployment has risen by 5,300 over the year, and it now stands at 104,500. That figure represents 14·3 per cent. of the work force, and it is far too high. The rate of increase has, however, moderated in recent months, and is substantially below that of the United Kingdom as a whole. Similarly, although output and employment levels in Northern Ireland have fallen by about 2 per cent. over the year, that compares with United Kingdom decreases of about 3·5 per cent.

Moreover, recent business surveys point to an increase in business confidence in Northern Ireland, and to a welcome revival in export performance. Taken overall, the past year has provided encouraging evidence of Northern Ireland's economic resilience and capabilities.

The Province has a particular need for a strong economy, by reason of its special circumstances. Strengthening the economy is therefore a compelling objective for the Government, and we are pursuing it in a number of different ways. Within industrial support schemes, we have placed increasing emphasis on the types of measure that will secure material improvement in business performance and assist the companies that have the greatest potential for growth. We have set up an industrial research and technology unit within the Department of Economic Development. That will have the task of promoting innovation and higher levels of research in Northern Ireland industry. Those matters are vital if we are to secure competitive advantages in world markets.

The Local Enterprise Development Unit has recently completed an overhaul of its portfolio of assistance so as to reflect its new approach to the task of stimulating enterprise and developing small businesses. A combination of world economic conditions and renewed paramilitary attacks on business have undoubtedly made it a difficult year for attracting inward investment in Northern Ireland.

However, I am encouraged by the fact that more Northern Ireland companies than ever before participated in Industrial Development Board-sponsored trade missions and trade exhibitions last year. They illustrated the growing willingness and ability of Northern Ireland companies to look for export markets. I have already visited a fairly new company that exports pharmaceuticals to more than 90 countries. The IDB's efforts have produced immediate results, with £12 million-worth of orders generated and potential orders in excess of £48 million.

That trend has also been seen much closer to home. The evidence is the growing interest of industry and commerce in exploiting the opportunities that exist for trade with the Republic of Ireland. The Government believe that there is scope for a substantial increase in trade, which would lead to more jobs and greater wealth in both economies. We are co-operating fully with the major business organisations to bring that about.

I pay tribute to the efforts of the Industrial Development Board. It has been working very effectively with the Irish Trade Board to develop exhibitions and road shows that will help companies from the north or south to demonstrate their products and capabilities to each other. We are seeking also to open up the public purchasing market in Northern Ireland and in the Republic to small firms from all over the island.

Good communications are vital in facilitating trade. The Belfast-Dublin rail link, which the British and Irish Governments announced two months ago, will result in valuable time savings on the journey between Belfast and Dublin. Work on it will start later this year.

During the year, the activities of the Training and Employment Agency have increasingly reflected the need to stimulate improvements in company competitiveness. Therefore, we have substantially increased the agency's budget for management development programmes and a new company development programme has been launched to assist companies to improve skill levels and performance throughout their entire organisation.

The year 1991 was encouraging for the tourism industry, with Northern Ireland recording its highest ever number of visitors—1·19 million. Within that figure there was an increase of 18 per cent. over the previous year in the number of holiday visitors, which stood at more than 250,000. Earlier this year, legislation was introduced to give more powers to the Northern Ireland tourist board. We have increased the board's budget and that should provide a solid platform for further advance in developing Northern Ireland as a competitive and attractive tourist destination.

Although it is important for the Province to be prosperous, its society must be just. Therefore, the

Government remain unequivocally committed to eradicating inequality of opportunity and relative disadvantage based on prejudiced discrimination wherever they exist in Northern Ireland.

The Making Belfast Work campaign has been at the heart of our effort and will continue to be so. This year, I announced that we were making available to the programme a further £26 million which will be carefully targeted. That will make the total allocation to date more than £100 million and by the end of 1994-95 the total will be more than £148 million.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I appreciate the Secretary of State's point about the Making Belfast Work campaign, but why has Belfast, South been ignored when grants have been given to north, east and west Belfast? There are some areas of extreme deprivation in south Belfast; it is not all the Upper Malone.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's proper concern. I am certain that Belfast, South is not ignored. Applications for grants under the Making Belfast Work campaign may not have been successful—not every grant can be. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, who will reply to the debate, will consider that question and, if possible, reply in more detail.

Funding for the Making Belfast Work campaign is over and above the resources that Departments continue to put into these areas through their normal mainline programmes. The Government recognise, however, that significant inequalities persist in the social and economic conditions experienced in the two principal parts of the community in Northern Ireland. We believe that greater equality of opportunity can be achieved by improving the social and economic conditions of the most disadvantaged areas and people in Northern Ireland. If we can do that, the connotations for the healing of deep-rooted divisions in the community are obvious.

For that reason, the Government established the targeting social need initiative as a high public expenditure priority—the third, in fact. Targeting social need is a long-term programme. It will identify where the highest levels of disadvantage and deprivation exist and will analyse the precise extent to which Government policies have a differential impact on each side of the community. It will target resources and programmes more sharply on areas that suffer the highest levels of social and economic disadvantage. By those means, we intend to remove differentials and to rectify inequalities of that character. Work is afoot to put in place mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing not only this but other Government policies and programmes and to develop consequential action plans.

Our efforts to improve community relations between the different parts of Northern Ireland's community provide another component of our endeavour to promote a just society. We are committed to encouraging and securing greater contact between the communities.

I realise that it sounds extraordinarily trite to observe that greater acceptance of cultural diversity is necessary, but observations are trite only because they do not admit of dissent. The Government do not shrink, therefore, from proclaiming the need for acceptance, nor from putting their money where their mouth is—or, more accurately, the taxpayers' money. Support for community relations projects, co-ordinated by the central community relations unit and the Department of Education, has increased rapidly from about £250,000 in 1986-87 to £7 million in this financial year. Those measures should, over time, yield a worthy return.

I should now like to deal with the political talks that were initiated with such patience by my predecessor. As the House will understand, the talks have been a major preoccupation since my arrival as Secretary of State. In recent weeks, there has been intense activity, to which the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) has already referred, as the parties have fully engaged on strand 1 issues. Those issues are to do with the nature of the relationships between the peoples of Northern Ireland, including the relationship between any new institutions and the Westminster Parliament.

The talks have been variously carried forward in plenary sessions, in sessions consisting of meetings between party leaders—either en bloc or individually with me—and in sub-committees chaired by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary or by senior officials. All involved have demonstrated an unflagging will to press on with the work in hand, even at the most difficult moments—and there have been some. I express my admiration and gratitude for that, as I do for the constructive tone of our discussions.

It would not be helpful for further progress if I were to describe the course that the discussions have taken. The important thing is that I can report to the House that in my judgment there is now wide agreement on the next steps in the process of the talks. Accordingly, on the joint invitation of the two Governments, Sir Ninian Stephen has convened a meeting of representatives of the two Governments and of the four participating parties for tomorrow. It is intended that a possible agenda for strand 2 shall be discussed. The Government and the Irish Government teams will be led on that occasion by senior officials.

The two Governments are also to hold a meeting next week to give preliminary consideration to the issues likely to arise in strand 3, when relationships on the east-west axis will be considered. The meeting will be attended, for at least part of the time, by observers from each of the Northern Ireland parties.

In my brief time as Secretary of State, I have been touched by the public's desire—"yearning" would not be too strong a word to use—that this time the talks shall succeed. I have gone out to meet people in the streets of Londonderry and Belfast, and they have impressed it on me there. I meet with it in all sectors of the community and in all places. Certainly, we can take heart from the fact that the talks continue to make headway and are following a constructive pattern.

That this is so is due to the participants' commitment and in great measure to their courage. Those qualities I know to be undiminished, but I owe it to the House and to the participants in the talks to warn that a task of great magnitude still lies ahead in the strands yet to be embarked on.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): Given what the Secretary of State was saying about the commitment of hon. Members from Northern Ireland, and given that, as is usual when Secretaries of State speak in the House, he began his remarks by guaranteeing to the people of Northern Ireland the state to which they belong, do the Government agree that, if the death and destruction that have taken place on our streets had taken place on the streets of Britain, that

[Mr. John Hume]

would have been the major issue in the general election? If the matter were then debated in the House, would not the House be packed? It is noticeable that there is only one hon. Member here who does not come from Northern Ireland, apart from Government and Opposition spokesmen. Do not the Government conclude from that the same as appears to us—there is a total lack of interest among the people of Great Britain and their representatives in the House?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I think that I should do well to address the right hon. and hon. Members who are present rather than reflect on those who are not. However, if there is a conclusion to be drawn, it might be to reinforce all of us in our desire to end the indignity to which I referred, whereby the people of Northern Ireland have very little local representation in matters affecting their government. That should therefore spur us all on to the goal of the talks, which is to set in place—if we can do so in a just, workable, durable and acceptable way—newly devolved administrative and political structures for the government of Northern Ireland by people answerable to the people of Northern Ireland in the first instance.

I was warning lugubriously, at the end of a speech which has, I hope, been other than lugubrious in tone, that we face a task of great magnitude in the remaining process of the talks. The Government will, of course, become a participant to strands 2 and 3. There are many difficult obstacles still to overcome which have hitherto proved intractable but

"if hopes were dupes, fears may be liars",

and I believe that all who are engaged are heartened and perhaps even inspired by the public desire, to which I referred, that we break out of the cycle of the past 20 years. Until we do so, Northern Ireland must continue to experience direct rule, and accordingly I commend the order to the House.

4.34 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): There were times during the Secretary of State's speech when I felt that he was almost tempted to stray into the next debate, on the appropriation order. But he manfully resisted the temptation, and in the next debate my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) will respond to some of the points made by the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

On such occasions it has become a ritual almost as old as direct rule itself to express hope that more acceptable and mutually agreed political institutions will obviate the need for a further renewal of the order in 12 months' time. This time, however, there are some reasonable grounds for genuine hope that that is more than just a pious aspiration. The talks, which have been in progress for the past eight weeks, offer the possibility—I put it no higher than that, bearing in mind the warnings which the Secretary of State has just given the House—that new agreed arrangements may be in place by this time next year.

The Opposition have given full support to the present initiative since it was launched by the previous Secretary of State in 1989, and we shall continue to do so, in the knowledge that the best way to resolve the conflict in Northern Ireland is through a process of negotiation and agreement involving all the constitutional interested parties within the island of Ireland and between the two Governments. We therefore wish the participants in the talks well in their endeavours to secure agreement. None of us has any illusions about the difficulty of achieving that, and we recognise the great qualities of imagination and determination required of the negotiators. We firmly hope that they will live up to the expectations placed upon their shoulders not only by the people of Northern Ireland but by the people of the island of Ireland—and indeed by the people of all these islands, who have suffered and are under threat as a result of the situation in Northern Ireland.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) that it is regrettable that greater interest is not shown by the House in the debate. Sadly, Members of the House may be reflecting the attitudes of constituents, and of the people of Britain in general. Indeed, I wonder if the attendance would be so depleted if a conscript rather than a volunteer army were serving in Northern Ireland.

We believe—to use a cliché—that no stone should be left unturned in the search for an agreement. We hope that the talks will cover all the relevant issues, and we feel strongly that they should move rapidly to strands 2 and 3. Above all, we hope that the Secretary of State will be able to present an agreed package to the House in the autumn, or early next year.

In the meantime, the Government remain solely responsible for the good administration of Northern Ireland. Last week we discussed security, so I have no intention of embarking upon that subject today. We shall discuss appropriation later. Now we are considering the whole subject of the direct rule of Northern Ireland, so it is important to consider one or two of the other issues, some of which the Secretary of State mentioned.

One issue which the Opposition feel must be regarded as a priority is that of equality of opportunity between the two major traditions in Northern Ireland. For us the principle of equality of opportunity is non-negotiable, and we were pleased to hear the Secretary of State underline that in his speech.

Equality of opportunity in employment is especially significant for those of us who hope to establish a just and peaceful society in Northern Ireland. A number of recent cases have shown the need for continued vigilance and progress on that score. The Government must make it clear to all employers and all employees, and especially to the state organisations, that neither they nor the House will tolerate discrimination, whether direct or indirect, and that remedial action must be taken to eliminate any unacceptable practices.

In that respect, the decision by Queen's university to review its employment practices after recent cases is to be welcomed, and we hope that it is a model that will be copied elsewhere. However, it is of the utmost regret that, years after the passage of the Fair Employment Act, it should be said of the Eastern health board by the tribunal dealing with the case of a woman applicant that it had

"spun a web of deceit. It was one of the most blatant pieces of discrimination by a state authority."

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): That report affects my constituency. The Protestant community in Northern Ireland regrettably see the Opposition spokesman as being concerned only about the under-employment of the Catholic community. At no time does he express concern about under-employment of the Protestant community. He has now referred to two cases, both of which affect

under-employment of the Catholic community. There is massive discrimination against the Protestant community in the Eastern health board area. Some 75 per cent. of the people who live there are Protestants, yet only 55 per cent. of the employees are Protestants. When will Labour's official spokesman speak up for the Protestants of Northern Ireland as well?

Mr. McNamara: I do not speak up for the Catholics of Northern Ireland, or for the Protestants of Northern Ireland; I speak up for individuals who suffer discrimination. I will speak up in favour of those who suffer discrimination, whether Catholic or Protestant. If the right hon. Gentleman had paid a little more attention to speeches by Labour Members at the time, for example, of discussions on employment prospects at Harland and Wolff, and at times when there have been closures in other industries in Northern Ireland in which Protestants were the main employees, he would have heard vigorous attacks on Government policies that resulted in the threat of unemployment and actual unemployment for many members of the community for which he speaks. I hope that he, as a Member from Northern Ireland, does not speak only for the Protestant community, but that he speaks for all his constituents, Protestant and Catholic, who may suffer discrimination in any way.

The Secretary of State will also be aware of the increasing suggestions that race relations legislation in Britain should be extended to Northern Ireland to afford proper protection to the ethnic minorities there. Although we accept that a simple extension of the legislation would create difficulties with the existing legislation on discrimination by gender, religion and political opinion, we suggest that the Secretary of State considers the best way in which he can meet the spirit of the suggestions put forward by organisations such as the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights.

SACHR is a body whose importance the Opposition do not ignore. However, we feel that its effectiveness would be enhanced if the Government occasionally acted on its suggestions. Two years ago, SACHR produced its second report on equality. The report identified a number of issues on which progress could be made. SACHR proposed that the provisions of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 governing discrimination by Government Departments and by public bodies be strengthened and brought into line with the relevant provisions of the European convention on human rights. We believe that a bill of rights is necessary for Northern Ireland, but we think that, in its absence, partial measures such as those proposed by SACHR would at least demonstrate the Government's commitment to equality of opportunity.

SACHR also proposed that the impact of equality of opportunity and the treatment of all legislation, administrative decisions and policies should be monitored. We are happy to endorse that suggestion. We believe that such measures should be introduced immediately and that regular reports should be presented to Parliament and to any assembly that may emerge in Northern Ireland on matters such as the siting of industry and what effect that has on employment patterns in the area.

SACHR also proposed that discrimination in the provision of goods and services on the grounds of religion and political opinion be outlawed. That would bring Northern Ireland legislation into line with sex discrimination legislation in Northern Ireland and with race relations discrimination legislation in Britain. That proposal seems eminently sensible to the Opposition.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The hon. Gentleman has spoken for some time on the laws governing discrimination, and on relating the law in Great Britain to the law in Northern Ireland. Surely, as a United Kingdom, we should have exactly the same law across the kingdom on these matters. Will he therefore support the concept of extending to the minority ethnic communities of Great Britain the laws that look after the interests of the various communities in Northern Ireland, especially in regard to employment?

Mr. McNamara: If the hon. Gentleman had read our election manifesto, he would have seen that we proposed a great strengthening of the law with regard to racial legislation within this island based on the principles and experience of what had been carried through in Northern Ireland——

Mr. John D. Taylor: There were no Labour candidates in Northern Ireland.

Mr. McNamara: The courtesy and good humour of the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) are outweighed only by his intellect and by his ability to interrupt from a sedentary position.

Mr. Taylor: When will you give us candidates?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. It is widely known that seated interventions are to be deprecated.

Mr. Taylor: The Opposition spokesman has suggested that my hon. Friend the Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) should have read the Labour party manifesto. Does he understand that no one in Northern Ireland read it because the spokesman for the Labour party refused to allow candidates to stand in Northern Ireland?

Mr. McNamara: Again, the right hon. Gentleman has got it wrong. The spokesman for the Labour party cannot prevent Labour party candidates from standing in Northern Ireland. The decision not to organise in Northern Ireland properly rests with the conference of the Labour party, which took a wise decision on the matter. We have every confidence in our sister party in Northern Ireland, the Social Democratic and Labour party. We have every confidence in its socialist principles and its ability to carry through socialist policies. We regret only that we are not sitting on the Government Benches with the SDLP supporting us.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McNamara: This will be for the last time. I thought that this would be a short debate.

Mr. Trimble: I am a little curious about the hon. Gentleman's description of the SDLP as his "sister party". Did any Labour party candidates standing in the recent election receive a personal endorsement from any member of the SDLP? Did any other persons receive such an endorsement?

Mr. McNamara *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Before the hon. Gentleman continues with his speech, I must inquire how this matter relates to the motion.

Mr. McNamara: The matter relates to direct rule, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Hume: As leader of my party, I make it clear that I was proud to canvass for Labour candidates in the election.

Mr. McNamara: So too was the leader of the Irish Labour party. We are indeed an international party.

The Government have not treated the second SACHR report with the importance that the issues deserve. The response contrasts unfavourably with the attitudes of previous Secretaries of State when facing an earlier SACHR report on inequality in employment. We appreciate that there are many demands on the time of the Secretary of State and of his Ministers, not least at the present time, but we regard the equality issue as so fundamental that we urge the Government to take action. No one should have an excuse to claim that the British Government act only when forced to do so by international pressure.

This debate comes at a moment when the future of Northern Ireland is in the balance. We hope that a new system of government for Northern Ireland will emerge —a system that will command the consent and loyalty of the majority of its citizens, a system that will be capable of putting an early end to violence and a system that will bring about the peace, justice and prosperity for which the people of Northern Ireland long and for which so many of them have worked so hard for so long. If they achieved that, it would be a boon to not only Northern Ireland but to the whole of the island of Ireland and to the whole of the British Isles. Regretfully, we support the continuation of the legislation.

Royal Assent

Madam Deputy Speaker: Before I call the next speaker, I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Mauritius Republic Act 1992
Non-Domestic Rating Act 1992
Pittenweem Harbour Order Confirmation Act 1992
Mersey Docks and Harbour Act 1992
British Railways (No. 2) Act 1992

Northern Ireland Act 1974

Question again proposed.

4.50 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): This has been an interesting debate so far. I begin by expressing my thanks to the usual channels and the Government for switching the orders so that the constitutional position of Northern Ireland might be discussed first. The constitutional position is the fundamental basis on which everything else in the Province is built, and it has properly been put first on the Order Paper.

I must confess that when I listened to the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) I began to wonder whether either or both of them would get around to the constitutional position. They talked about everything under the sun except that. Perhaps that is understandable, given the delicate negotiations that are being held at present. Nevertheless, this is a debate on the constitutional position of Northern Ireland, its place in the kingdom and the desire of the House to uphold the will of the people of Northern Ireland to remain part of the kingdom.

The statutory instrument is short and simple; one can read it in a few seconds. It does not appear to say very much, but, of course, the consequences are far-reaching. It is not the first time that we have had such an order before us. It is now 20 years since the Stormont parliamentary system was suspended and replaced by the present temporary system. But then, I believe that income tax was originally a temporary tax-raising system. It has persisted for an awful long time. I hope that, unlike the income tax system under which we currently labour, we shall eventually see the legislation come to an end and we shall not have to come back here year after year.

There are a couple of ways in which the temporary legislation can come to an end. One is to alter the present constitutional position of Northern Ireland by restoring a devolved parliamentary system—whether it is legislative or merely administrative is, for the purpose of the argument, immaterial. The other way is by so-called total integration into the rest of the kingdom. Of course, in either case, this annual jamboree would come to an end. So long as it continues, some people are encouraged in their violent acts. I shall come back to that later.

The order is not just short. It conceals within two lines the denial of democracy, as it is commonly understood and practised in the western world, to the people of Northern Ireland. There is no democratic accountability whatever in the Province. When that is understood, people begin to understand the resentment felt by not only Members of Parliament on these Benches but many people in the Province.

The denial of democracy subsists in the fact that, although we have elections, the people who are elected have no power whatever over the disposal of the revenues expended in Northern Ireland at the highest level of Government and very little power over the disposal of resources at the level of local government, where local finance is raised and expended.

The denial of democracy also subsists in the fact that policies resisted by the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland have been put in place and sustained in an effort to buy off violent people. A great deal of what has been done in Northern Ireland has been an effort to buy off violent

people by being nice to them. It did not work when the Danes were raiding not only England but Ireland, and it is not working now. It will never work.

The end result is that the system of government is out of touch with the ordinary men and women in Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State can go out on the streets of Londonderry or any village or town of Northern Ireland and talk to people there, but he is not just an ordinary chap from England. He is the Secretary of State and everyone there knows him as the Secretary of State.

When the Secretary of State makes himself available to his constituents, a different relationship pertains. When he goes to a meeting of his constituency association or holds a surgery, he will come away from such meetings or confrontations with a much clearer idea of what people think than he would ever get from talking to half a dozen folk on the streets of Northern Ireland. It is a different ball game. If the Secretary of State does not come away from meetings in his constituency with a clear idea of what people think, there is something wrong with his constituents. They must choose their words with rather more care than mine do.

The system of government in Northern Ireland is also ineffective. If the Secretary of State denies that, will he be kind enough to lay his hands on the report of yesterday's meeting of the Public Accounts Committee as soon as it is published? A scandalous state of affairs was exhibited to public view at that meeting, principally with regard to the purchase of X-ray equipment in the health service. I should like to believe that, if responsibility for such matters lay in the hands of Northern Ireland people, such scandals simply would not happen. The system of government and administration is ineffective and inefficient and it needs to be replaced. There is no reason why matters such as the purchase of equipment for the health service cannot be under the control of people in Northern Ireland.

The system is also secretive, in that no one in Northern Ireland and certainly no one on this Bench has any detailed knowledge of how, and how much, money is spent in Northern Ireland. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will come back to that point in the debate. Information on where money is spent emerges only when the consequences are seen. Sometimes that can take years; sometimes the information never emerges fully. We are aware of what has happened to money as if we are perceiving it through a mist. That is not acceptable to me and it should not be acceptable to those on either the Government or the Opposition Front Bench. People should know. We should be able to question. A Select Committee on Northern Ireland would perhaps go some way towards enabling us to do so.

When my hon. Friends and I listened to the proceedings of the Public Accounts Committee yesterday, we found it not only interesting but sad. It was sad because there was no Member of Parliament from Northern Ireland on that Committee. A Northern Ireland member of the Committee would have known what matters were to be discussed and could have asked questions of people in Northern Ireland. He might have been able to put even more penetrating questions to those people appearing before the Committee than other Members of Parliament who do not have roots in the community and do not know what goes on in Northern Ireland. Personal detailed knowledge of a constituency is one of the great features of the House of Commons system of government and we should not abandon it in Northern Ireland. A vacuum exists at that level which needs to be filled.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), the leader of our party, has already said that he does not propose to take part in the debate because of the present discussions. Given the delicate nature of what is apparently going on, that is a wise decision. However, the discussions are designed to correct some of the matters that I have touched on in my remarks. I have no detailed knowledge of what is going on, as I am outwith those discussions.

Mr. John D. Taylor: And rightly so.

Mr. Ross: As my right hon. Friend should know, my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley has taken the Trappist vow of silence in regard to those discussions and has stuck rigidly to it.

Mr. Taylor: That sounds like a sectarian comment.

Mr. Ross: My right hon. Friend is making sedentary remarks again, and they are as amusing as ever.

A team of people have been given responsibility for these matters and are getting on with it. They also know that sooner or later they will have to sell the idea to the Unionist executive—a factor that has to be kept firmly in mind.

Mr. Taylor: Is that a threat?

Mr. Ross: No, it is not a threat, merely a statement of fact. Every party has its democratic views.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Member that he should be addressing me in the Chair. It looks as if a private conversation is going on on those Benches.

Mr Ross: I very much regret that you should think that you are being ignored, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have been acquainted since I came to the House and I know better than to cross swords with you because I usually come off second best.

Whenever we, who are outwith the discussions, read the press reports, watch television or listen to radio broadcasts on the subject, it is interesting. I cannot figure out who feeds those things to the media. If it is the Northern Ireland Office press officials, they are to be condemned. If the information being given out by the press and other news media is accurate, it does not square with what has been leaked out by other means and appears in other newspapers. If the information that appears in the press here and in most of the papers printed in Ireland—both north and south—is correct, there is something wrong, as one will know if one keeps an assiduous eye on *The Irish Times*, which seems to have not leaks but torrents. Until now it has published all, or certainly most, of the initial positions of the parties involved in the talks.

The articles printed in the Irish press and those that have appeared in the rest of the media are so different as to make one wonder who is giving who a steer. If *The Irish Times* is correct, the innuendo and slant of everyday press reports seem to be so far from reality that one must think that they can be designed only to create mischief, which would do no one in the island of Ireland any good.

I long ago concluded that democratic principles do not have elastic boundaries—a thing is democratic in practice

[Mr Ross]

or it is not. A system is either ruled by the people or it is not, and the system in Northern Ireland is not. If some people have their way, it never will be. There seem to be many folk who are opposed to the Union and who are determined to resist the idea of democratic rule and practice to the last ditch.

Democracy cannot be denied to Northern Ireland any more than it can be denied to anywhere else. If the system that is brought into being is not democratic, it will not work; and if it does not work, it will cause greater misery, for it will be proof to some people that politics has failed. If we are to avoid that danger, we must have practical and workable structures, and those can only be democratic. Nothing airy-fairy will do, or will be accepted by the people of Northern Ireland.

The crunch issue in Northern Ireland is not social and economic, as is the issue between the spokesmen on the two Front Benches. In Northern Ireland it has always been a question of which nation we belong to. As far as most of us are concerned, the well-being of our people is tied in every way to the nation to which we belong. The vast majority of us desire to belong to the British nation, we consider ourselves British and we intend to stay that way. Elsewhere in the world when the power and dangers of nationalist feelings were ignored and trodden down, they burst forth again. It is very dangerous to try to tell people that they must either belong or be thrust out of the state of which they are a part. If politicians and civil servants try to bypass the will of the people, that will eventually bring its own reward. We saw that clearly in Denmark a short time ago.

People have an emotional tie to the nation to which they belong and will maintain it. Some folk like to analyse problems; some will analyse until doomsday, but will never reach any conclusions. The problem in Northern Ireland is simple. There is a divided community, but the two sides have much in common. Divided communities are not unusual but are common throughout the world. However, I reject the desire of one side of that community to cling to the idea that they must for ever be separate from the rest of the United Kingdom, in language and culture, thereby making the division within the island of Ireland deeper and more bitter.

I am sorry to see that the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) has left us, as it must be especially galling to him—he has been so much in the lead in seeking ever closer union between the peoples of Europe—to find that he has to represent the separatist culture in Northern Ireland. If the desires for ever closer union expressed by the hon. Member for Foyle, which he promotes so assiduously, ever came to pass, there would not be two communities in Ireland, or a dozen in Europe, as they would all be one. If he is not working towards that end, what is he working towards, because that is the logical conclusion of his European policy?

The Government have been confused and have allowed themselves to follow a tortuous course, which has always seemed to have as its objective the avoidance of any democratic accountability in Ulster. They have been urged down that weary course by people who want a united Ireland. Perhaps we should ask why such a departure from normal democratic principles has been necessary to bring about such an end for Northern Ireland. Surely those who instigated that journey towards a united Ireland, the purveyors of that policy, know that their product is so unsaleable that no one in Ulster who values the British connection will ever purchase it. They would try every possible course of action before they would submit to being submerged in a united Ireland.

We have had tried the concept of power sharing, which is another name for minority rule. We are now presented with the concept of foreign commissioners being selected or elected to run part of the United Kingdom. If that came to pass, it would represent an abdication of responsibility to govern by the Government. Twenty years have passed since the first concept was introduced. The introduction of the second concept now simply confirms that our political opponents know that their product is not very good and that it is not now acceptable, never has been and never will be to the vast majority of the citizens of Northern Ireland. They do not have even the confidence to defend those policies for themselves. They need others to force them down the throats of the unwilling Unionist population in Northern Ireland. That policy has not worked and will not work.

If we are to find a reasonable solution to the problems of Northern Ireland, we must consider the United Kingdom as a whole. We must have the same basic system of government throughout the kingdom, but I accept that the various parts of the kingdom need a large measure of decentralisation from Whitehall. The Whitehall machine has become far too centralised: that belief would be echoed by many people on both sides of the House. We need a basic, sound structure to which to attach, or bolt on, as the Prime Minister said, bits to meet local needs.

There is nothing new in that. The legislation on the Northern Ireland statute book has long been separate, legally, from that of the rest of the kingdom. The Scottish legal system is also different. We have a Welsh Office and a Scottish Office, so we know that it is possible to create systems of administration that are somewhat different and take care of the needs of individual parts of the kingdom. They can and should be created.

On 1 June, the Prime Minister made an interesting speech in Ayr. He set out the clear limits that he would put on such bolt-on structures. I am sure that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has studied that speech carefully, because of the backwash effect it will have on thoughts of what is possible in Northern Ireland. It is clear that the Prime Minister understood that a devolved Parliament would be a disaster if it were led by separatists. He called it

"a step half-way across a chasm".

He was right.

Devolution within the United Kingdom will work only if it is run by unionists, who desire to maintain the unity of the kingdom. If it is run by separatists, it will not work. It is bound to create a separate Scotland and a separate Northern Ireland, divide and destroy the kingdom and weaken its voice in the world. The Cabinet is clearly aware of that. The Secretary of State is constrained in what he can do in Northern Ireland because he knows that it must bear comparison with the policy in the rest of the kingdom. That is a fundamental fact of political life and he must learn to live with it, as the rest of us must.

It is strange that the Northern Ireland Office is unique and its policies are so different from those enunciated by the Prime Minister. The Northern Ireland Office is remote from the Prime Minister's control; it was also able to defy

the control of his formidable predecessor. It carries on its policies regardless of changes in Government, elections, changes of Prime Minister or damage to the people and society in Northern Ireland. The policy of the Northern Ireland Office is to keep Northern Ireland at arm's length, and as different as possible, from the rest of the United Kingdom. Elected Governments are supposed to make policies and to have the strength and the will to put them into practice. If there are people in the machine who do not want to carry out those policies, it is the duty of Ministers to bring in people who will.

When we look back over the last 22 years, we see a tortuous policy that has kept the constitutional position of Northern Ireland in doubt. That policy is the root cause of violence in our Province. Until the constitutional position of Northern Ireland is put beyond doubt—both in words and in action—the violence will continue. The IRA and its fellow travellers will retain the hope that they will eventually achieve their ends.

Only the Government can make the changes. They know what must be done. The 1979 Conservative Party manifesto recognised what could be done. The Government know what can and must be done now. However, only time will tell whether they have the guts and the capacity to do that or whether the present incumbents in the Northern Ireland Office will fail the people of Ulster as much as their predecessors have done. The Secretary of State knows the score. Let him get on with it.

5.16 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): We have been invited by the Secretary of State to support the renewal of a system that is known as direct rule. No hon. Members thus far have put on record any details about what direct rule entails. If we are to make a qualified judgment and valuation as to whether we should support such a proposition, it might be worth while considering exactly what direct rule means and how it works.

I do not intend to give a detailed critique of the Government's economic strategy in Northern Ireland. To some extent, that was done by the Secretary of State when he underlined the present high unemployment figures. Many of us, including the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross), are aware of the strong criticism that the Public Accounts Committee has made of some of the Northern Ireland Office's work. I suspect that in the debate on the appropriation order there will be further criticism of the fact that tens of millions of pounds have been spent on equipment that has not been used for three years, when it probably has a life of five years only before it needs to be updated. No doubt we shall come to that later.

I do not intend to go into details on the security situation in Northern Ireland. Suffice it to say that more than 3,000 people have been murdered during the period of what is known in Northern Ireland as "the troubles". There is no sign that the Government are grasping the nettle of terrorism or that they have the will to defeat it by taking the necessary steps. The number of people maimed and mutilated in Northern Ireland is now well over 30,000. Those cold statistics of violence trip off the tongue quickly and easily, but each of them represents a real story of anguish and sorrow to families the length and breadth of Northern Ireland.

In a small community of 1·5 million people, with 3,000 people killed and 30,000 maimed and mutilated, few families have not been touched by the hand of terrorism. The failure of the Government to have the necessary resolute security initiative to tackle terrorism is inexplicable to those who have suffered at the hand of the Provisional IRA and their fellow travellers and terrorists on both sides of the community. We recognise that the terrorists are no less able today to continue their acts of terrorism than at any time in the last decade or so.

I wish to consider direct rule in terms of its political impact. When the House deals with legislation for England, Scotland or Wales, hon. Members who are sent here by their constituents have the opportunity of a First and Second Reading and Committee and Report stages of a measure, which then goes to the House of Lords, where a similar procedure takes place, and the measure may return here with amendments made in the other place. When we in Northern Ireland deal with such matters, by and large we deal with them through Orders in Council and we have the privilege of one debate, which in most cases lasts for an hour and a half.

When hon. Members who represent other parts of the kingdom deal with legislation, they can table amendments and hope to have them debated. Not so when we deal with Orders in Council. We are not permitted to amend legislation affecting important facets of life in Northern Ireland. We must take it or leave it. With a secure Government majority, that means that we must take it as presented by the Government.

In such circumstances, no real attempt is made, when we are presented with such legislation, to provide changes that would suit the people of Northern Ireland. Indeed, there is ample evidence to show that on many occasions when all the parties in Northern Ireland represented here have been opposed to legislation, the Government have thought that they knew better and proceeded with that legislation.

So we have an unrepresentative system. It is undemocratic and inefficient. If it is all of that when we are dealing with legislative matters, it is just as much that when we are dealing with Executive and administrative matters. While in every other part of the kingdom, locally elected representatives in local government on the mainland have the power to deal with matters concerning education, health, housing, planning and so on, in Northern Ireland that is not the case. There, local government does not have any of those responsibilities. Local government representatives in Northern Ireland can deal with technical services —such as choosing the day when the bins shall be emptied —with the burial of the dead and with community centres and recreational facilities, but that is the sum total of the powers of local government in Northern Ireland.

We are being asked to endorse that system. The Secretary of State presents that system to the House and asks for support. It is not a system of government that any elected representative from Northern Ireland believes is satisfactory. When other parts of the United Kingdom want to deal with issues such as health, education or trade and industry, there is a Select Committee where such issues can be dealt with in great detail. Does Northern Ireland not deserve a Select Committee? Does it not have as much right as other parts of the kingdom to handle detailed consideration of such issues? We do not have those opportunities in the House.

[Mr. Peter Robinson]

So direct rule is not a satisfactory system of government. As the Secretary of State knows—because I have been boring him and his colleagues for the last seven weeks—I believe in devolution for Northern Ireland. Power should be delegated to its elected representatives. That would be the best way of having local flavour in Northern Ireland legislation. It would involve using properly the knowledge of those elected directly by the people of Northern Ireland. They would have more say in decisions affecting Northern Ireland.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) referred to the Prime Minister's speech in Ayr. I had the privilege of being there when that speech was made. In it, my right hon. Friend demonstrated the effects of devolution on the future of Scotland and the suggestion of it being one step towards removing Scotland from the United Kingdom. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that devolution would be right for Northern Ireland? I warn him that it would be one step towards what I feel sure he does not want, which is the separation of Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom.

In my view, every Conservative Member believes that Northern Ireland should be totally integrated into the United Kingdom. The hon. Gentleman's suggestion——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is in danger of making a speech rather than an intervention.

Mr. Robinson: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's intervention. He will appreciate that in addition to making those remarks in Scotland, the Prime Minister referred to proportional representation during the election campaign as "Paddy's roundabout". Yet the Government perpetuate that system in Northern Ireland for elections to local government and, indeed, to assembly elections. So there seem to be double standards, not only in terms of devolution but in terms of representation from the point of view of the franchise.

Devolution is not new to Northern Ireland. We had it before and it was successful. I suspect that those who lived through the old Stormont Parliament, even from a nationalist's standpoint, recognise that it was more accountable to the people of Northern Ireland than under what we know as direct rule. The devolution that we had in Northern Ireland did not endanger the Union. Northern Ireland was as much a part of the United Kingdom as any other part.

I do not accept that every part of the United Kingdom must be dealt with in exactly the same way. Northern Ireland should not be dealt with in any less satisfactory a way than other parts. The remoteness of Northern Ireland from the centre of Government in the United Kingdom makes it essential that there is a form of devolution in Northern Ireland, with regional government for the Province in Ulster. The hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) need not worry greatly about the possibility of devolution in Scotland leading to separation. If I were allowed to go further, I would suggest to him that probably the reverse is true. Failure to have devolution in Scotland may lead to separation, and the future may reveal that to many hon. Members.

As for the relationship between direct rule and Northern Ireland, for the reasons I have stated, we need accountability in government in Northern Ireland. We need people who are answerable to the electorate there taking the day-to-day decisions. For those reasons, the talks process is vital, and that is why my party is committed to it, recognising that Northern Ireland should remain an integral part of, and have a close relationship with, every part of the United Kingdom. Indeed, in the context of devolution—perhaps devolution throughout the United Kingdom—it may be particularly important that the talks process takes account of what happens in other parts of the kingdom.

I suggest to the Secretary of State that no Unionist representing a Northern Ireland constituency would walk enthusiastically through the Lobbies to support the renewal of direct rule. The Secretary of State did not tell the House that we are doing more than simply endorsing the renewal of direct rule. Another piece of paper goes to the heart of how decisions are taken in Northern Ireland but does not come up for endorsement by the House, despite the fact that it is part of the Government's programme in Northern Ireland. Obviously, I refer to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Direct rule permits the Government of the Irish Republic, through that agreement, to have a role in Northern Ireland greater than that exercised by any elected representative from Northern Ireland. The Anglo-Irish Agreement can be given life because of direct rule. It is one of the main reasons why Union representatives participate in the talks process with such enthusiasm.

Therefore, the only message that I can give the Secretary of State tonight is that there is no enthusiasm on these Benches for direct rule or its renewal. Like the Opposition spokesman, I trust that this is the last time that we shall have a renewal debate. I want a permanent solution to the problems that have beset Northern Ireland. I want structures of government to be set up, which the people of Northern Ireland can support, in which their elected representatives can take part, and which will bring confidence to the whole community.

The Secretary of State said that he would say little about the matters going on in the talks process and both he and the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) spoke about confidentiality. As a talks participant, I am bound by the same rule. However, I can tell the House that my colleagues and I are totally committed to that process and to doing everything within our power to ensure that it works. We are also committed to the people of Northern Ireland, and we say to them that our participation in that process is consistent with the principles that we share with them: that Northern Ireland is and will remain an integral part of the United Kingdom.

5.32 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Like many Northern Ireland Members, I am circumscribed by the confidentiality to which the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) referred in terms of the Anglo-Irish talks. However, it would be permissible to say that the people of Northern Ireland, from whichever part of the community they come, earnestly desire a fruitful conclusion to those talks. They strive for a resolution to our problems, which will give them, first, peace in their communities and homes and, secondly, an opportunity to strive a little further and faster in economic and social recovery. That is why so

much rests on the participating parties and Governments in all three strands of the talks in which we are now engaged.

It would not be appropriate for me to discuss the detail of the talks in respect of the concept of direct rule. It is paradoxical that we are not allowed to address the subject matter of the debate. However, I can rebut some of the comments made in the debate. One of the problems in dealing with the situation is that people do not look at the problem before dealing with the solution. The remarks of the hon. Member for Derry, East (Mr. Ross) show that there is still a blinkered vision, at least in some quarters, of the problem before us.

To suggest that, in the present context of deaths and injuries referred to by the hon. Member for Belfast, East, the history of the past 50 years and 20 years respectively amounts to the same problem as that experienced by Wales, Scotland or England is simply to deny the existing position.

Mr. Trimble: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that substantial nationalist movements exist in Wales and Scotland, as well as in Northern Ireland. The only factor distinguishing Northern Ireland from them is the fact that some nationalists in Northern Ireland resort to violence.

Mr. McGrady: The hon. Gentleman does not do justice to history, which I know that he is well aware of. I shall not go into the historical causes of Northern Ireland's problems and the division that was imposed by force in the 1920s when Ireland was partitioned, creating the concept that force has its own success. For that reason, some people to this day take sustenance from the mistaken belief that force can achieve political change. I hope that we are in the process of illustrating clearly that that is not so.

Mr. William Ross: Is the hon. Gentleman trying to tell the House that the Irish Republic would have come into being even if no force had been used by the IRA?

Mr. McGrady: I do not wish to be drawn aside at this sensitive moment in the talks, but history as it is written in books shows clearly that the force and the threat of force were major factors in the settlements of the early 1920s.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): On the point made by the hon. Member for Derry, East——

Hon. Members: Londonderry, East. There is the problem.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for a Member to change the name of a constituency that has been decided by the House? The name of the constituency is Londonderry, East and no one has a right to change that.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Each hon. Member must be responsible for what he says, and I would not wish to intervene in that matter.

Mr. Mallon: With reference to the point made by the hon. Gentleman who made the previous interjection, is he suggesting that, if the rising had not taken place in 1916, the Republic of Ireland would still be an integral part of Britain? If so, he is not considering the progression that has taken place within Ireland, Europe and many other parts of the world.

Mr. McGrady: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention on an intervention. On constituency names, I have been surreptitiously successful in changing *Hansard* to record my constituency not as "Down South" but as "South Down" for obvious reasons. It is strange that the hon. Gentleman did not refer to the 50 years before the 20 years. It is the tradition of his party and may, for all I know, be his ambition on behalf of his party today, to re-establish a totally separatist, devolved Stormont Government. Again, if he examines history on that subject, he will find that it could not survive because of the manner and means of its administration.

I have strayed into constitutional matters, which I had hoped to avoid. I must return to the Secretary of State's comments on the stewardship of the Northern Ireland Office during the past year, although he can take the credit or blame for only about 25 per cent. of that year—the tenure of his office. He said that he would like to secure a just society for the people of Northern Ireland, and I shall comment on that aspect of the stewardship as distinct from the constitutional one.

The Secretary of State said that the economy was resilient and that business confidence—inspired by the possible and long-forecast economic recovery—meant that the economy was ready to spring forward. I refer him to the conclusions of a recent report of the Department's Northern Ireland economic council which gives one of its most depressing economic forecasts of the past three years. There seems to be some contradiction between the Government's interpretation of the economy and that of the Northern Ireland economic council.

Anyone considering that report, the lack of job creation results achieved by the industrial development board and its sister organisation, the Local Enterprise Development Unit, would become despondent about where the Northern Ireland economy is heading. Many of us are disturbed and perturbed about the IDB's change of objective away from targets towards the more nebulous sectors of marketing, research and promotion which, while good and proper in themselves, will not provide signs of the efficiency and worthiness of the enterprise. I hope that, in the ensuing months, the Secretary of State and the Minister responsible for economic development will address that problem.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) referred to fair employment and job opportunities. Many press reports have appeared during the past couple of weeks on the eastern health board and, more recently, about Queen's university and the can of worms that is opening there. In his wind-up speech, will the Minister of State say in what way, how often and against whom—in both the private and public sectors—the penalties of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 have been used? In how many cases have Government Departments taken action against firms and boards in the public and private sector?

Mr. Peter Robinson: Will the hon. Gentleman join me in condemning the way in which Protestants in Downe hospital in his constituency are discriminated against?

Mr. McGrady: I cannot join the hon. Gentleman in his condemnation, as it is based on a false premise. If he wishes, he can ask the Fair Employment Commission to report on that issue. He would then find that he would have to withdraw his accusation.

[Mr. McGrady]

I well remember that there was opposition from Unionists to the concept of fair employment. There is an old saying in my constituency that one should not hide behind the bush and shake it at the same time. It seems strange for people who opposed and condemned fair employment legislation to complain that there are no weapons to defend it. Will the Minister of State tell us what action the Government have taken to deal with people and organisations who have been found guilty, particularly as appointments to some of the bodies and boards mentioned are made by Government Departments?

Health boards have recently made some catastrophic announcements. I shall parochialise the debate and draw on my experiences in South Down. In the past few months three homes have closed: St. Leonard's at Warrenpoint, and Mourne House and Navan House in Newcastle. The Cowan-Heron hospital at Banbridge has also closed, and it is proposed to close the Nidurne hospital in Kilkeel and the Downe hospital in Downpatrick. That will mean that every hospital facility in the constituency of approximately 750 square miles of mountainous terrain will be closed, as will the old people's residential homes to which I referred.

If that is how the Government intend to secure a just society in Northern Ireland in terms of equity of treatment, opportunity and availability of health resources, God help the rest of us. I appreciate that the Northern Ireland Ministers present today have not been in their positions for long, and the policies may be a hasty translation of civil service intent.

Mr. Trimble: I am sure that it was merely a slip of the tongue by the hon. Gentleman, but I must correct him. Cowan-Heron hospital is in Dromore in his constituency, which underlines the difficulties. While there is still currently a hospital in Banbridge in my constituency, which is adjacent to his, there are ominous signs that it may face severe cuts or even be closed in the near future. That would aggravate his constituents' problems.

Mr. McGrady: On this occasion, I can thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention and support, and I take note of what he says about the two hospitals at Banbridge and Dromore. However, the concept is the same—a pattern of closure.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East referred to the imposition of the English health and social security regime by way of Order in Council. Implanting that system in Northern Ireland, and translating the education order—without a letter of it being changed—into an entirely different system—will reduce the effectiveness of the education system in Northern Ireland. Will the Secretary of State and the Minister ponder whether such activities are the result of financial constraints or a dogmatic translation of party philosophy? If those developments are the result of financial restrictions, we know where the answer might lie. If they are the result of party dogma, the policies must be adapted so that they suit the requirements of Northern Ireland.

I hope that the process on which we are now engaged will bring us together to address those issues. At either departmental or ministerial level, the policies seem to diminish the quality of life and the opportunities available to the people of Northern Ireland. If that is what direct rule means for the future, the people of Northern Ireland are in for a lean time.

5.48 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I am happy to say that, since the point when the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) intervened in the Secretary of State's speech to point out how few Members were present, there has been a slight increase in numbers in the Chamber. I could not help thinking at the time, however, that, although the Secretary of State had announced that he was using this speech to give an account of the way in which direct rule had operated over the past year, the absence of interest in the Chamber stemmed from the fact that he was not giving a proper account of direct rule. This is not a true exercise in accountability; it is merely a ritual which offers pretence accountability.

If there were true accountability, that would be shown at the Northern Ireland Office in the same way as it is shown at other Departments: the proper Committee system of the House would be used to subject the Northern Ireland Office to scrutiny. That does not happen. To pretend that a short speech delivered to empty green Benches is an exercise in accountability is to insult the intelligence.

A few months ago we marked the 20th anniversary of direct rule. It was introduced in 1972 in an Act whose title included the words "Temporary Provisions." I refer to the Northern Ireland (Temporary Provisions) Act 1972. Those temporary provisions have lasted 20 years.

When the then Administration decided in 1972 to suspend the Northern Ireland Parliament and to take direct control of affairs there, they did not need to put in place arrangements for direct rule. It was necessary only to suspend the Northern Ireland Parliament. The Parliament came into operation in 1921. Before then the affairs of Northern Ireland were treated in this House in exactly the same way as those of any other part of the United Kingdom—and so they had been ever since this Parliament was created. Since the creation of this Parliament in 1801 right through to 1921, the United Kingdom operated, generally speaking, as one political unit and the affairs of its constituent parts were handled in the same way.

Legislation meant proper legislation—the introduction of a Bill, First Reading, Second Reading, Committee and so on. That was what primary legislation meant, and matters were handled thus with no problems or difficulties between 1801 and 1921.

Between 1921 and 1972, Northern Ireland was granted devolution. The Conservative Administration wanted to terminate this form of devolution, however, and to achieve that they needed only to suspend the Northern Ireland Parliament and the status quo ante would be restored—legislation would be passed in the usual way, Ministers would be appointed in the usual way and there would be, one hoped, the usual accountability.

In 1972, the then Administration, followed by every successive one, took a deliberate decision to disapply normality so as to ensure that normal procedures were not followed. They did so by instituting for the first time in 1972 and thereafter renewing every year since the system that we call direct rule.

The Secretary of State referred to this as an inherent indignity, which is putting it mildly. The indignity is inherent in direct rule, not in the circumstances that obtained in Northern Ireland before 1972. The indignity was created for the first time in 1972 as a deliberate act of the then Government and it has been repeated by every Government since—subjecting the people of Northern Ireland to a continuing indignity. So the apologies of the Secretary of State carry no weight with anyone familiar with the situation.

What is happening is misrepresented elsewhere, too. Like other Members, I cannot comment directly on the discussions taking place elsewhere, but I want to say one thing about those talks. I refer to an editorial in *The Times* on Monday this week. It was a curious piece, replete with inaccuracies:

"Fifteen years of direct rule are widely regarded in Northern Ireland as having been, on balance, a good thing." There are two obvious errors in that statement. There have been 20, not 15, such years, and direct rule is not widely regarded as a good thing. One wonders what the editorial's source of information was.

The editorial goes on to say:

"direct rule has left intransigence more entrenched, local politics swamped by gang war . . . Direct rule has driven communal leadership away from politics, leaving extremists to rule the petty baronies granted them by direct rule. Public money has been spent as nowhere else in the United Kingdom".

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Michael Mates): That is true.

Mr. Trimble: I take it that the Minister is referring to public money having been spent in Northern Ireland as nowhere else in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Mates *indicated assent.*

Mr. Trimble: The obvious rejoinder is to ask whether the money has been wisely spent, and the evidence from the Public Accounts Committee yesterday shows that it has not been.

Mr. Mallon: The hon. Gentleman has referred to the confidentiality of the discussions to which I and all the other Members are adhering. What would he think of anyone involved in confidential discussions who, during those discussions, met leaders of paramilitary organisations to keep them informed of what was happening at the talks?

Mr. Trimble: I would not approve of that. I confess that I am puzzled by the hon. Gentleman's question. I am not aware of any such contacts with paramilitary leaders, but if the hon. Gentleman is, I should be grateful if he would tell me what they are. I am happy to give way to him for that purpose.

Mr. Mallon: Ask the Secretary of State.

Mr. Trimble: I notice Ministers shaking their heads. I know that it is a lot to ask, but perhaps when the Minister replies he will give us some elucidation—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have pointed out before that we must not have muttered seated interventions. They make for confusion.

Mr. Trimble: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. William Ross: The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) has certainly caused a great deal of confusion in our minds. It seems that he is perfectly sure who has been meeting paramilitary organisations. He is free in this House to make the names public; he cannot be sued outside even if he makes an inaccurate statement. Giving the names would allow those whom he is accusing by innuendo a chance to reply.

Mr. Trimble: I entirely agree. The hon. Gentleman's comments have understandably caused a great deal of muttered bemusement. He has hinted at improper conduct by members of my party—I am sure, wrongly. Later he suggested that the matter was connected with the Secretary of State.

Mr. Mallon: I did not.

Mr. John D. Taylor: A serious smear has been cast on the Floor of the House to the effect that one of the members of one of the delegations to the inter-party talks at Stormont has been confiding details of the talks to a paramilitary organisation. The only Member of this House to have had contacts before with paramilitary organisations is the leader of the party of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon)—the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), who met Sinn Fein before the inter-party talks commenced. It is an even more serious matter if someone participating in the talks is passing secrets to paramilitary organisations.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) said that the Secretary of State knows which member of which delegation is revealing the secrets to the paramilitaries. Will the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) ask the Minister who is to reply to the debate to reveal the name that the Secretary of State apparently has?

Mr. Trimble: I thank my right hon. Friend. I have already said that I should like whoever replies to the debate to touch on that matter. I have also given the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) opportunities to substantiate the hints that he has dropped. I was prepared to give way to him on that point earlier, and I am prepared to give way to him now.

Rev. William McCrea: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is easy for someone to come to the House and question the integrity of a number of other hon. Members or persons connected with the talks? If such a Member does not name the person or withdraw the allegation, does the hon. Gentleman agree that that puts a question mark in the minds of a number of other hon. Members about the integrity of the person concerned? As the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) has brought the Secretary of State into the matter, does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the Ministers on the Front Bench should draw the matter to the Secretary of State's attention so that he can return to the House and make a statement? A serious question mark has been placed over the integrity of a number of hon. Members.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) continues, I make the point once again that interventions, however strongly felt, should be brief.

Mr. Trimble: I am sure that my hon. Friends and the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) will

[Mr. Trimble]

take your comments, Madam Deputy Speaker, to heart. But their interventions were justified, if only to underline the seriousness of what has just happened and the reluctance of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh to speak further on the subject.

When the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh intervened, I was quoting from an editorial in *The Times*, which said:

"Direct rule has driven communal leadership away from politics, leaving extremists to rule the petty baronies granted them by direct rule".

That is a curious sentence. There are petty baronies that operate with indirect rule and there are people who rule over petty baronies. The implication of the editorial and the way in which it is expressed is that they are extremists. They are not defined, but the earlier sentence referring to gang war might lead one to think that they were members of paramilitary organisations or other bodies. Some areas are effectively dominated by terrorist organisations, but I suppose that Ministers would say that it is not their policy to encourage those organisations.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Is it possible that, despite that juxtaposition, "petty baronies" might be a reference to the elaborate growth of quangos which are unaccountable to the House or anybody else?

Mr. Trimble: Precisely. My hon. Friend anticipates the point that I was about to make. The petty baronies that are flourishing under direct rule—they exist under direct rule and are nourished by it—to which the large sums of public expenditure to which we have referred are granted are unaccountable bodies, quangos, creatures of the Northern Ireland Office, operating in an unacceptable manner and free from any proper accountability within the House or to the House. It is towards them that criticism should be directed.

I shall not refer further to the comments in the editorial on the inter-party talks because, as we said earlier, those matters should be regarded as confidential, but I could not help but notice that, in *The Times* on the same day, Monday 15 June, its Northern Ireland correspondent, three times—once on the front page and twice on an inside page—said that the discussions that would take place in the afternoon of the next day were the first occasion since 1914 that there had been talks between unionist and nationalist leaders. Some of my hon. Friends are laughing, and well they might.

To say that there were no such talks after 1914 is to display a lamentable lack of knowledge about what has happened in the time in between; to ignore the discussions that took place in 1921 and 1922, particularly the Craig-Collins pact; to ignore the treaty of 1925 negotiated between north and south; to ignore the ministerial meetings that took place afterwards; to ignore the numerous meetings that took place from 1926 until the late 1960s at official level on a range of matters; and even, although it is not a matter of particular pride to me and my colleagues, to ignore the participation of some unionists in the Sunningdale talks in 1973.

That is the quality of the information available to readers of a paper of record. I can assure them that the other comments in the paper on the inter-party talks, in so far as they touch on matters of which I have knowledge, are wrong. I shall say no more about that.

In the equivalent debate last year on 20 June, when I touched on certain matters, the then Minister of State, the hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), said that he had no doubt that I would return to those matters. He was right: I shall. The points that I wish to develop relate to another aspect of the inherent indignity of direct rule.

The argument which I developed last year and which I want to place before the House this year is that the direct rule procedures in Northern Ireland are not just offensive, an insult and an indignity, but also contrary to the United Kingdom's obligations under international law and a breach of the United Nations covenant on the protection of civil and political rights and other matters.

On that occasion, I referred to article 25 of the United Nations covenant on civil and political rights, which states:

"Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in Article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions:

(a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;

(b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors;

(c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country."

The hon. Member for Peterborough endeavoured to reply to the point by saying:

"I am not sure that I accepted the premise of his argument because all citizens of Northern Ireland enjoy the right to elect representatives at local and parliamentary levels and themselves to stand for election."—[*Official Report*, 20 June 1991; Vol. 193, c. 573.]

That is a correct and fair point to make. But it is pertinent only to article 25(b), whereas for the purpose of my argument the crucial provision is paragraph (a), which says:

"take part in the conduct of public affairs."

Other international human rights documents contain equivalent provisions and spell out a little more what is meant by the phrase "public affairs." For example, in the American declaration on rights and duties, clause 20 says:

"Every person having legal capacity is entitled to participate in the government of his country, directly or through his representatives".

The African declaration of rights includes exactly the same phrase:

"the right to freely participate in the government of his country".

I think that the reference to public affairs implies not only the opportunity to be elected to a body, but to effective participation in governmental organisations.

Article 25 of the international covenant on civil and political rights uses the words

"without any of the distinctions mentioned in Article 2".

Clause 1 of article 2 states:

"Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognised in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."

The point is reinforced by article 3, which states:

"The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights set forth in the present Covenant."

Article 2 mentions various distinctions—those of race, colour and sex. We are familiar with those distinctions in the context of anti-discrimination legislation; legislation

exists in part of the United Kingdom in regard to all of them. However, the article also mentions national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Surely there can be no doubt that to treat Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland differently in respect of civil and political rights is to fall foul of the anti-discrimination provision in the article.

There may be some argument about the precise definition of, for instance, "national . . . status" or "other status"; there may also be some argument about whether the United Kingdom contains several different nations. Nevertheless, it is clear to me that to provide different rights—lesser rights—for those in one part of the United Kingdom constitutes a breach of the anti-discrimination provision in the covenant. Linking article 2 with article 25, which relates to the opportunity to take part in public affairs or to participate in government, provides clear evidence that discrimination against part of the United Kingdom in that regard constitutes such a breach.

When I raised the matter in the House a year ago, the hon. Member for Peterborough—then Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office—responded briefly in his winding-up speech. Some time later, however, on 27 September 1991, the then Secretary of State gave a slightly fuller response in an interview in *The Irish Times*. The interviewer had contrasted the Government's position on devolution for Northern Ireland—which they had advocated—with their opposition to Scottish devolution, and had happened to mention my name. That seemed to trigger off a slightly different response from the Secretary of State. Rather than answering the question about the contrast in the Government's two attitudes to devolution, he said:

"I hesitate to cross swords with a distinguished academic . . . but my recollection of 1886 and the crisis in the Liberal Party when Mr. Gladstone brought forward the proposals relating to Home Rule included observations by a very distinguished constitutional lawyer who was strongly opposed to the principle of Home Rule and indeed took a High Tory position on it, but who did acknowledge as a constitutional lawyer that there was nothing about the constitution of the United Kingdom which required the manner in which the different parts of the kingdom are governed to be universal." That of course, was a reference to Mr. Dicey.

A number of responses can be made to that. First, we are living not in 1886 but in 1992, and the United Nations covenants on international and human rights to which I have referred post date 1886. Secondly, I am not arguing for absolute uniformity; it is reasonable to expect variations. There must be some leeway, but the question is, how far can that leeway go?

In the United Kingdom, as in other countries, there are various systems of local government. England and Wales have a system that involves district councils, county councils and so on; Scotland has a system of regional councils. There are slight differences between English and Scottish local government. The differences, however, are matters of administrative convenience; they are not fundamental to the system. I doubt whether the differences between English and Welsh local government and Scottish local government can be seen as depriving people of an opportunity to participate in public affairs or in government.

But what if there were no local government? What if it were decided to abolish local government in part of the United Kingdom so that county councils, district councils, parish councils and the like no longer existed? Would that be regarded as a breach of the articles? I think that it would. That is virtually the position in Northern Ireland. There are bodies there called district councils, but, as we all know, they have no real function. Effectively, Northern Ireland has no local government.

A good analogy is the Potemkin village. In Tsarist Russia, when the Tsar was visiting certain areas, the local administrators would build facades of villages to convince him that everything was all right: they looked fine on the outside, but the reality was somewhat different. Similarly, the Northern Ireland district council structure boasts marvellous buildings, and some roads—I shall not describe them as marvellous. Behind that facade, however, there is nothing; there is a complete absence of opportunity for participation in public affairs or government. That, surely, is a breach of the covenants to which I have referred.

The same applies to law-making functions. Hon. Members have mentioned the indignities of the Order-in-Council procedure, which deprives us of an opportunity to participate meaningfully in the way in which legislation is enacted. Again, it could be said that the empty green Benches in the Chamber reinforce the view that this particular law-making function—such as it is—is a ritual event.

What I have said does not apply only to modern international law. We are part of the United Kingdom; surely that very phrase must imply a single entity, with the same rights running through it. The principle was there, although perhaps not very clearly expressed, even in the treaty and the Acts of Union produced in 1800. Article 6 touched on what was a major point at that time—the principle that, in any treaties dealing with matters of trade, Ireland would be treated in the same way as Great Britain. Even the Act of Union included an obligation to treat all parts of the kingdom on an equal footing—limited to trade in article 6, but endorsing the principle that I am addressing: the principle of uniformity on, at least, core citizenship rights.

In a sense, it is in the treaty of European union. It tries to define the citizenship rights that would attach to the new European state—if it should come into existence, but that is another matter. The fact that the states involved felt that the treaty should specify the rights that attach to citizenship reinforces the point that certain core citizenship rights should exist throughout the Union.

I welcome the comments made about race relations legislation by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). He is right in saying that there should be protection for the civil rights of persons of different races residing in Northern Ireland. There may not be many of them, but the quality of one's rights should not depend on numbers. It should be the same whether it is a handful of people in Northern Ireland or thousands in England.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North also referred to employment. To correct comments that have been made elsewhere, let me say that we do not oppose, and have never opposed, the concept of equality of opportunity. I am glad that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North used the phrase "equality of opportunity". We are complaining about the way in which that concept is being applied by a particular quango in Northern Ireland.

Criticism has been made of my former employer, Queen's university, Belfast. It is not perfect and I will not

[Mr. Trimble]

say that it was incapable of discriminating. In fact, I was a victim of discrimination on the ground of religion and political opinion. On that occasion I approached the chairman of the Fair Employment Commission to discuss the matter. I was left in no doubt that, if I attempted to pursue the case through him, I would be unsuccessful.

There is a distinction to be drawn between equality of opportunity and equality of outcome. Equality of opportunity is consistent with fair employment legislation. To try to compel equality of outcome in every different place of employment and at every different level in Northern Ireland is foolish and unlawful. The Secretary of State is nodding his head. If he is agreeing with me, I hope that he will speak to the chairman of the Fair Employment Commission, because equality of outcome in every different place of employment in Northern Ireland is the declared policy of that quango. It is not consistent with the legislation or with good sense. To use the words that the Home Secretary used on a previous occasion, it will be damaging, dangerous and difficult.

I touch on those points because we are dealing with the concept of core citizenship rights that should include freedom from discrimination on racial and other grounds. Any concept of core citizenship rights must have at its centre the right to participate in the political process in a realistic way. The direct rule system denies that to us. Direct rule is an indignity, an insult, a breach of the United Kingdom's obligations under international law and worse. As I said at the outset, in 1972 it was not necessary for Her Majesty's Government to impose direct rule. Suspending Stormont, in the absence of any other provision, would merely have involved a reversion to the status quo before 1921. No additional legislation was necessary. The normal position with regard to legislation and administration would simply have swung into place.

Instead, the Government decided to introduce a system that kept the affairs of Northern Ireland at arm's length. That deliberate decision nto to treat Northern Ireland as a genuine part of the kingdom sent a signal to others that Her Majesty's Government were, in some respects, qualifying their attitude to the Union and the rights of the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Robinson: I remind the hon. Gentleman that earlier in his remarks he gave way to the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). In that intervention there was the clear implication that some delegate in the talks process had been divulging confidential information to paramilitaries during a meeting that he or she may have had with those paramilitaries. When the hon. Gentleman challenged the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh, he invited him to ask the Secretary of State. May I ask the hon. Gentleman to do that?

Mr. Trimble: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention, because it again draws the Secretary of State's attention to the issue and reinforces and underlines to the Minister who will be replying that we expect this matter to be touched on so that that slur can be refuted. It is untrue of myself, and I am sure that it is untrue of my colleagues. I wonder whether the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh was referring to his colleagues or other persons who are not present today but who are part of the talks process. All those persons deserve to have that slur removed from them.

By keeping the citizens of Northern Ireland separate, direct rule was carrying a signal to various people. This Tuesday was the birthday of a distinguished colleague who was active in the House for many years. I am referring to the former Member for South Down, the right hon. J. Enoch Powell. I remember vividly, a year or two ago, watching BBC's "Question Time" in which Mr. Powell was taking part. A member of the audience asked him when he thought that the violence in Northern Ireland would end. As quick as a flash, Mr. Powell said, "It will end when the British Government stop encouraging it." There was a gasp from some members of the audience, who did not appreciate the force or accuracy of his comment.

Mr. Powell was perfectly correct. Before violence can end, it will be necessary for Her Majesty's Government to stop encouraging it. They are encouraging violence because they repeatedly send to others, including terrorist organisations, the signal that the position of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom is qualified and conditional and may change. That is an encouragement to those persons to believe that by their violence they may achieve what they would call progress. If we are to see that violence end, a significant step—it may not be complete —would be to end that signal by ending direct rule.

My next point goes back to comments made in 1986. It sums up the quality of democracy available to the people of Northern Ireland. In an interview broadcast to the electorate of Northern Ireland on the eve of the by-election referendum that my hon. Friends had organised on the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the then Minister of State said:

"It doesn't matter how you vote, it won't make any difference."

As I have said, that was an accurate description of the quality of democracy. People who wish the ballot box to triumph over the bomb and bullet must ensure that voting enables elected people to play a genuine part in public affairs. That requires the ending of direct rule.

6.29 pm

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): The main political parties in the Republic of Ireland—Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Irish Labour—contested the last local elections in County Cavan. For the first time, there were candidates with another title—the pothole candidates. Not surprisingly in Irish politics, they topped the poll and won the seats. The person responsible for potholes in Northern Ireland is the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland; he is charged with the responsibility of checking potholes and ensuring that they are filled and repaired. That is direct rule in practice, and one day my constituents will bring to my attention the various potholes in my constituency and I will have to table a series of questions to the Secretary of State asking when he intends to fill them in.

The Secretary of State knows as well as I do that that is a ridiculous situation. It was outlined in greater detail by the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson), who identified the nonsense of the direct rule system. The people of Northern Ireland have no say in the main public decision-making process and in decisions affecting planning, housing and most aspects of local government

such as health and education. Yet those things could be achieved if the Government had the will to introduce them in Northern Ireland.

Devolution is not necessary to give people democratic powers over planning, health, schools, roads, sewage and water supply. After all, there is no devolution in Scotland or Wales, but people there have control over those issues. There is no logical reason why such elementary matters are withheld from people in Northern Ireland.

One reason why it does not happen is the inconsistency within the Conservative party and the Government on matters affecting the government and administration of the various parts of the United Kingdom. The Government recommend inter-party talks in Northern Ireland to get an agreed solution to the next system of administration and government of that part of the United Kingdom. That, apparently, is the policy of the Conservative party; yet in Scotland it boycotts and campaigns against inter-party talks on the future administration of Scotland. The inconsistency in Conservative policy in Scotland and Northern Ireland stands for everyone to see.

Conservative candidates stood for the first time in the most recent United Kingdom election. They campaigned against devolution, yet the then Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), proposed a policy for inter-party talks. It was noticeable that he spent only 20 minutes campaigning for those Conservative candidates. His absence had an effect, because those candidates made little progress in the election. If the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland had advocated the same policy as Conservative candidates, the people of Northern Ireland would have had more respect for the Government.

It is not good enough to say that it is for the people or parties of Northern Ireland to reach a decision on how and when they will be ruled and governed. The Government also have a responsibility, but for 21 years all Governments have shirked it. The Government must remove all doubts about the status of Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom. It is not good enough for the Secretary of State to say, "Our position on Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom is well known and I need not repeat it," only to imply in his next few sentences that it is much the same as his attitude to Scotland, Wales and England. We know that that is not so, and it is misleading the House to say so. There is always a condition in the Secretary of State's support—and, in fairness, in that of his predecessors—for Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom, which does not apply to Scotland or Wales: that Northern Ireland should remain a part of the United Kingdom as long as that is the wish of its people.

The Prime Minister talks about how he will fight to strengthen and support the union between England and Scotland, but he has not yet said that he will work to support and strengthen the union between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. We need new consistency in Conservative party policy on the union and on how the different parts of it will be administered and governed.

The Secretary of State said that he was here to give an annual report—a bit like a school report—on how the Government had administered Northern Ireland under direct rule. Direct-rule Ministers have a difficult job. At a personal level, they are very welcome, but at a political level they represent a system of government that is offensive to the people of Northern Ireland. They are not elected by the people of Northern Ireland, nor are they answerable to them for their decisions. Scottish Office Ministers are elected by the people of Scotland and are answerable to them for their decisions, but that is not so in Northern Ireland. The people of Northern Ireland must be involved in the administration of that part of the United Kingdom.

The Secretary of State referred to transport systems and mentioned the improvement in the rail system between Belfast and Dublin. One welcomes any improvement in transport systems in the island of Ireland and the British Isles, but we must get our transport priorities right. A political decision has been made by Conservative Ministers in the Northern Ireland Office to concentrate moneys on road and rail systems from Belfast to Dublin, at the expense of our main transport systems to Great Britain. In the past few years, schemes to Larne and around the city of Belfast have been dropped and money has been reallocated to the road to Dublin. That, of course, has taken place since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The Secretary of State, in an attempt to support his programme of improving the transport systems to Dublin, referred to the support that he was receiving from business and industry. But only 5 per cent. of Ulster business goes to the Republic of Ireland; 95 per cent. of our trade goes elsewhere, and the routes that that trade uses should be getting the priority attention of the Secretary of State. He should concentrate on the routes to Larne and from Belfast to Great Britain and actively work with the Scottish Office to improve the transport systems on the west coast of Scotland. That is where 90 per cent. of people want the routes improved, and those are the priorities on which the Secretary of State should concentrate rather than merely bringing into practice the Anglo-Irish Agreement and its preference for routes to Dublin.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): One of the uses of the Anglo-Irish parliamentary body is that we could make a study of the transport issue. Although 90 per cent. of the trade comes from Northern Ireland, how much trade comes from the Republic via Belfast and Larne because of Government investment in those ports? The answer is, a great deal.

Mr. Taylor: That is an important point, with which I agree. I believe that about 30 per cent. of the loads of the ferries from Larne to Scotland is now taken up by trade and business from the Republic of Ireland.

As I said, we want improvements in road and rail structures, but not just those from Belfast to Dublin. We want the Secretary of State to concentrate on the links to Larne and to make the No. 1 priority the improvement of the road and rail systems on the west coast of Scotland. Only then will the natural option of Northern Ireland industry and of southern Irish industry to use those routes be properly dealt with.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) referred to the present talks at Stormont. We all read *The Irish Times* every day to see what is happening at those confidential talks and, of course, the reports are of interest. We congratulate those who are contributing their time and effort to try to reach some accommodation in Northern Ireland and we wish them well in their work. Suffice to say at this stage that, just as the Anglo-Irish

[Mr. Taylor]

Agreement is offensive and has helped to bring about the present stalemate in Northern Ireland, no agreement will be acceptable to me if it gives Dublin a role in the internal affairs of Northern Ireland. I want to make that clear now.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh also made a serious accusation. He said that one of the 40 delegates taking part in the inter-party talks was having other secret meetings with a paramilitary organisation. We have many such organisations—the Irish National Liberation Army, the Irish Republican Army, the Ulster Defence Association, the Ulster Volunteer Force and others. We know that, before the talks commenced, the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour party had meetings with the IRA, but I gather that the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh was not implying that it was his party leader who was secretly revealing what was happening in the inter-party talks with a terrorist organisation. However, he announced that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland already knew the name of the delegate to the inter-party talks who was in contact with a paramilitary organisation.

That is not only a serious slur on one of the 40 participants in the talks: it must make most of those taking part in the talks ill at ease if they know that, every time they converse at the so-called confidential talks, one of their number is revealing the contents of those talks to a paramilitary organisation. It is regrettable that, when given the opportunity by my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh did not withdraw his allegation. Apparently, he stands firmly behind the allegation that a member of the Stormont talks is in contact with a terrorist organisation.

A great responsibility now rests on the shoulders of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland or whichever Minister replies to the debate to clarify the serious allegation so that those taking part in the talks and the public might be put at ease. The Secretary of State or the Minister must confirm that there is no substance whatsoever to the hon. Gentleman's allegation.

6.44 pm

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I shall be brief.

Complaints have been made about the green Benches always being empty for debates on Irish affairs. That is because we are sometimes subject to lectures, as though we were naughty children, about what O'Flaherty said in County Mayo in 1874. Some hon. Members could get jobs as history lecturers if the electorate were to treat them badly in due course. Someone pointed out that we live in 1992, not in the era to which reference was made.

I accept some of the criticisms that have been made about direct rule, but when it was introduced—rightly or wrongly—it was seen as a temporary short-term measure while another method, post-Stormont, could be worked out for governing Northern Ireland. I do not understand why the Government or I or any other Government supporter should be castigated for what happened in 1972. It was not our responsibility then, and, in a sense, it is not our responsibility now.

Direct rule was introduced in the best possible faith. It was to be for a short period. Stormont had not worked; if it had, it would not have been dissolved. The troubles that arose were partly the result of the political organisation emanating from the treaty in the 1920s. Rightly or wrongly, some people regarded Stormont as a sign of Protestant supremacy. Whether they were wrong or right does not matter, because that is how they saw it, and that was part of the trouble.

Successive British Governments—mainly Conservative Governments—have struggled to find a replacement for Stormont and for direct rule. I have not approved of any of them. I did not approve of Sunningdale, although I was not then a Member of the House; nor did I approve of the sort of devolution that Lord Prior suggested when he was Secretary of State. I certainly did not approve of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and I still do not approve of it. I agree with the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor); I would oppose any solution to the problem—if it be a solution—which involved a direct input by the Dublin Government into the affairs of Northern Ireland. I would not wear that.

Some of us said that the Anglo-Irish Agreement would not work because, apart from being fundamentally wrong, it simply would not work, and it has not. Some of us said that rolling devolution would not work, and it did not. In any case, it was wrong in principle.

I hope that no one thinks that I am involving myself in a family fight, because I am not. I believe that the more Englishmen who take notice of these matters the better, but I do not know what the solution is. The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) said that the solution was devolution, but of what sort I am not entirely sure. One hon. Member gave us a smattering of integrationism—I add my birthday congratulations to Enoch Powell—but I do not quite know what that means. It is impossible to suggest that the Province is Yorkshire or Surrey, because it is not, and self-evidently it is not.

I am sure that the Government would wish to get rid of direct rule as soon as they could. They are not power-crazed people who wish to go around filling in potholes. Of course we would like to find a sensible and democratic solution.

I also agree that it would be extremely helpful if Ministers could say in the clearest, most unequivocal terms that the unity of the kingdom includes Northern Ireland as much as it includes Scotland, Wales and England. I have asked them to do so many times over the years. I do not think that "as long as the people of Northern Ireland wish it" is a condition, but it is a flavour which need not and should not be there.

I do not know what form of government there will be in the future, nor whether the secret public talks will get anywhere. The atmosphere among the kith and kin on the Opposition Benches make me mildly suspicious that those talks will not get all that far. But please, gentleman, the English cannot solve the problem for you, but you might be able to solve it for yourselves—or perhaps there could be a combination of all those things.

There is one thing that the Dublin Government could do. They could withdraw their territorial ambition and their claim to the territory of the United Kingdom. That claim gives a bogus legitimacy to some of the activities of some of the bodies operating in Northern Ireland.

I have had a ramble round the course. It is for people in positions of power and influence in the Province to reach some accommodation and to make some progress. In the 20 years that all this has been going on more than 3,000 people have been killed. We have tried almost everything by way of political progress. I wish my right

hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State well. He knows that he has a difficult act to follow in my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), to whom I pay tribute, although I had to disagree with some of what went on in his time. At least he tried. At least the Englishmen are trying. I hope that some of the Irish will do us the honour of trying as hard.

6.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): We have had an interesting debate which has touched on a number of topics. I am grateful to the House for the generally constructive and helpful way in which it has debated the order which will renew direct rule for another 12 months.

Apart from the present political talks, which have inevitably loomed large in the debate, many other matters have been raised, and I shall deal with them first. As has been rightly said, it is disappointing that there are not more hon. Members in the House to discuss the issues, but clearly most hon. Members are leaving the discussion to those more directly affected, and we should be grateful for that. It would be wrong to discuss such issues in Committee. The proper place to discuss so important a subject is on the Floor of the House.

The hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) asked about the allocation of the Making Belfast Work funds. He wrote to the Secretary of State recently —on 12 June, I believe—and he will shortly receive a substantive reply. We recognise, as the hon. Gentleman must also recognise, that south Belfast receives an allocation of resources under the scheme and has an action team in place. I can assure him that its problems are taken as seriously as those of any other part of Belfast. Let us wait for the reply of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said that we took no notice—or perhaps took no action—on the reports of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights. In fact, SACHR is a well-respected body and the Government are fully committed to creating equality of opportunity and equity of treatment for all sections of the community in Northern Ireland. We issued a comprehensive response to the second report, to which the hon. Gentleman referred. That was laid before the House and placed in the Library, and therefore made public, before the general election. It is a valuable report which should assist informed and constructive debate; we continue to examine its recommendations in consultation.

At this point it is appropriate to pay tribute to Sir Oliver Napier, who retires on 1 July, to be succeeded by Charles Hill QC. Sir Oliver has served very well indeed, and I assure both him and the House that the Government read the reports most carefully.

Mr. McNamara: I join the Minister in paying tribute to Sir Oliver Napier. Will the hon. Gentleman help the House by publishing in the *Official Report* the recommendations in the various SACHR reports and saying which ones the Government have accepted?

Mr. Hanley: I shall willingly consider the hon. Gentleman's request.

Last night's Public Accounts Committee meeting has been mentioned. I have not seen the questions, nor heard the answers. Some hon. Members—and perhaps some right hon. Members—who are here now were present then. However, I saw the newspaper reports when I woke up in Belfast this morning, and I believe that some hon. Gentlemen may be quoting figures from those reports. The newspapers said that £48 million worth of X-ray equipment was in store. In fact, £48 million happens to be the total value of X-ray equipment in the Province as a whole. The value of X-ray equipment in store is about £0·3 million. A press notice has been issued putting the matter straight. Indeed, the Public Accounts Committee criticised the fact that £0·3 million-worth of equipment was in store, and my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State responsible for health and social services will consider the report carefully.

Notwithstanding the seriousness of the comments made by the PAC, it is a novelty to be accused of paying teachers too much. Nevertheless, I shall read what was said and see whether I draw any conclusions therefrom.

Mr. Trimble: I am not sure of the details yet, because I have not seen the PAC report, but I am sure that the Minister is aware that the complaint concerns the alleged freedom with which education boards and other bodies grant teachers premature retirement with enhanced pension rights. The hon. Gentleman may be aware of the widespread belief—it certainly exists in my constituency —that there has not been equity of treatment between the controlled sector and the maintained sector with regard to enhanced pension rights for teachers taking early retirement. Written answers to my parliamentary questions have tended to bear out that belief.

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful for that clarification, and I shall examine the issue carefully when I see the PAC report and the minutes of last night's meeting.

At least four hon. Members mentioned the legislative procedures. I assure the House that the Government fully recognise that the current legislative procedures are less than satisfactory. The Order-in-Council procedure is hardly ideal, but under direct rule it is the only practicable way to deal with most Northern Ireland legislation. We have constantly invited hon. Members to enter discussions on possible ways in which the present arrangements could be improved. If it were possible to create a local administration in Northern Ireland——

Mr. Trimble *rose*——

Mr. Hanley: If the hon. Gentleman wants me to give way again, I shall, but it will take time from his colleagues in the later debate.

Mr. Trimble: I shall try to observe a self-denying ordinance hereafter.

Will the Minister consider the Boundary Commissions Bill, or the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, both of which are now going through the House, and both of which apply to Northern Ireland without causing any inconvenience?

Mr. Hanley: Indeed, perhaps hon. Gentlemen would consider exactly that experience when they determine whether the current talks will be successful, so that we can pass legislative powers back to local politicians and give them greater scope to debate and decide legislation for the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. John D. Taylor: We must pursue this matter more honestly. My hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) referred to the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill and the Boundary Commissions Bill, which have nothing to do with the talks at Stormont. Please let us not raise that as a side issue. Such things happen irrespective of the talks at Stormont. All that was necessary in those two Bills, which apply to the whole of the United Kingdom, was one clause of five or six words saying something like, "This Bill will extend to Northern Ireland." That is all that we have to do, irrespective of the talks. Let us not use the talks as an excuse for everything that is bad in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: I believe that the House knows why we have preserved a different legislative procedure for Northern Ireland. It grants to Northern Ireland the possibility of the privilege of its own government, which is largely agreed by right hon. and hon. Members. Many may disagree. We have continued with the way in which we legislate against all the difficulties. I assure the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) that there will be many changes to the legislative process and to the way in which Bills go through the House if the talks can be brought to a successful conclusion. That is not an excuse. It goes to the heart of how the legislative process for Northern Ireland will be dealt with in future.

Some hon. Members have mentioned the Northern Ireland Select Committee and the absence thereof. We believe that the arrangements for the scrutiny of matters within the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland are best taken forward as one of the areas under discussion in the talks. I am not at liberty to discuss whether we have mentioned the subject of a Select Committee. I say merely that it would be remarkable if, during the procedures we are undergoing, we did not mention the subject of the Select Committee. The Government's response to the report of the Select Committee on Procedure—it is largely a matter for that Committee—is to say that we are keeping the matter under review.

The Fair Employment Act was mentioned by the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady). Since 1 January 1990, when the Act came into force, the Fair Employment Tribunal has issued 186 decisions. The applicant was successful in five cases and unsuccessful in 21. Thirteen complaints were resolved by conciliation and the balance of complaints were withdrawn. Many other complaints await hearing. In the first monitoring round, 16 employers were prosecuted and fined up to £150, and in the second round, in 1991, five employers were prosecuted. One employer was disqualified from receiving a public contract and Government grants because of continued failure to make a return. The disqualification was lifted when the company complied. A major effort is being made to address the issues to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Rev. William McCrea: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hanley: I will give way for the last time.

Rev. William McCrea: There is deep concern in my constituency about the Fair Employment Commission's lack of will to tackle the problems facing many Protestants in the constituency. I have referred on numerous occasions, in the presence of the former Minister with responsibility for economic development and in the presence of Mr. Cooper, to certain areas for investigation. I have not even had a letter acknowledging that Mr. Cooper is looking into the matter. Is it not about time that there was fair treatment for both sides of the community?

Mr. Hanley: I have heard what the hon. Gentleman said. I will pass on his comments to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, and I hope that he will be able to respond in due course.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) argued that the present arrangements for the government of Northern Ireland might be inconsistent with article 25(a) of the international covenant on the protection of civil and political rights. I was not aware of that article until the hon. Gentleman raised the subject in an Adjournment debate some months ago, so I studied it with some care as the Government might be the subject of accusations under that covenant. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not respond on this occasion, as I know that he can respond at length on the issue because of his very great knowledge.

The opportunities afforded to Northern Ireland politicians or citizens to participate in the Government at Westminster and at district council level, and in a wide range of public bodies in Northern Ireland, may be sufficient to fulfil the requirements of the covenant. Even if they are not, and even if there were a question about the result of the absence of any structures of government at regional level, the Government's efforts to find a solution, including the efforts we are making now in the talks process, show that we are trying to produce a wider framework for stable relationships in the community.

The vast majority of comments this evening have involved the political talks. It was natural that they should be prominent in our thoughts and in our words. On behalf of the Government, I must tell the House how much I welcome the expressions of support which have been forthcoming from hon. Members of all parties. There have been well-deserved tributes from hon. Members of all parties, which I support, to the courage and tenacity of the participants in the talks.

The obituary notices for the process have been written on more than one occasion. It is greatly to the credit of the parties that the talks are still up and running, and continuing to make headway. We are present at history in the making; I hope that the history will be good for the future of Northern Ireland.

Under the agreed ground rules, which were underlined by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), it would not be appropriate for any of us to divulge details of the discussions, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State explained that in his opening remarks. There has been a constructive and intensive engagement since the new talks reconvened on 29 April and much common ground has been identified, although there is still much to be resolved. Anyone with knowledge of Northern Ireland will know that, although much has been achieved, we are still a long way from final success. Nothing can be agreed at any one stage of the discussions until everything is agreed in the three strands as a whole. Over the weeks ahead, it will be a matter of continuing the good work of recent weeks, and of further developing the trust and understanding that have been developed so far.

The talks are an unequivocal demonstration of the right way in which to attempt to resolve differences in a civilised society. If there is to be trust and understanding based on

mutual respect, it can be achieved only through proper political dialogue, and not through guns or bombs. That is why the Government will continue to do everything in their power to ensure that the talks continue their forward momentum.

Another issue was raised by a number of hon. Members. I admit that I did not hear some of the exchanges. Neither I nor my right hon. and learned Friend has any evidence of the matters being raised, so I have decided not to pursue them at the moment.

Mr. Mallon: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hanley: I will not give way at this point, because I must end my speech. I do not intend to pursue the matter at this stage. I repeat that neither I nor my right hon. and learned Friend has any evidence of any such matter, and I stress that.

Mr. Mallon: Is the Minister saying unequivocally that the Secretary of State has no knowledge of what was suggested and that no knowledge was made available to him from any other source?

Mr. Hanley: Many accusations can be made by different people in different ways. Accusations can be made by newspapers and all sorts of comments can be made. But the Secretary of State and I must act on evidence. We have no evidence of the things that were referred to earlier.

In the meantime, through direct rule, the Government will continue to help the people of Northern Ireland to secure a tranquil, peaceful, just and prosperous way of life and one in which both sides of that community can work together to achieve that goal. I commend the order to the House.

Question put:

The House divided: Ayes 152, Noes 11.

Division No. 36] **[7.10 pm**

AYES

Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Bates, Michael
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Beresford, Sir Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burt, Alistair
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cox, Tom
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendron, Dr Joe
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Luff, Peter
Lynne, Ms Liz
McGrady, Eddie
MacKay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Maitland, Lady Olga
Mallon, Seamus
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Mates, Michael
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Morley, Elliot
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stott, Roger
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. Sydney Chapman

NOES

Beggs, Roy
Livingstone, Ken
McCrea, Rev William
Maginnis, Ken
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Trimble, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. William Ross and
Mr. Clifford Forsythe.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Northern Ireland Act 1974 (Interim Period Extension) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 2nd June, be approved.

Mr. Trimble: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. During the previous debate, while I was speaking, the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) intervened to allege that a person involved in the present inter-party talks in Northern Ireland had arranged a meeting with unspecified paramilitary persons for the purpose of conveying to them information about the talks. I gave the hon. Member the opportunity to intervene again to identify that person and to substantiate his allegations, but he declined. However, he made a comment from a sedentary position which I did not hear clearly at the time but which some of my hon. Friends heard. When I asked him to substantiate his claim, his comment was, "You should be blushing." That is a clear allegation that I was the person he was accusing.

[Mr. Trimble]

Needless to say, that allegation is totally false and without foundation. Is it in order for hon. Members to make such allegations and, when given the oportunity to substantiate them, to fail to do so, and to fail to withdraw them when they are clearly denied?

During the following debate, when the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh returns to the Chamber, would you give him the opportunity to do the honourable thing?

Mr. Molyneaux *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Is it further to that point of order?

Mr. Molyneaux: Yes. I think that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will appreciate that I have a responsibility to protect the reputation of my team of 10 in the talks. That would also apply to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) with his team; and one other party, which is not present in or elected to this Chamber, would have the same difficulty. To avoid prolonging the discussions, perhaps the most effective way to deal with the matter would be for the Secretary of State or the Minister to say that this matter will be referred to special branch to investigate and report to the Secretary of State before the next plenary session of the four teams of 10.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members will be aware that all sorts of comments are made from a sedentary position, none of which has any status in the House. I think that that answers the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), who raised the first point of order. The Secretary of State and Ministers have heard the comments made by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) on the second point, and it will be for them to decide how they wish to respond.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was judged by the House for something that I was accused of saying when seated. I find it amazing that some new rule has suddenly been introduced about such interventions. I was sitting in the Gallery, I never even stood up, and I was thrown out of the House. *Hansard* reported that I had said something that was in order, yet I was thrown out for saying something while sitting, and I was not in the House. My hon. Friends, sitting on this side of the House, plainly heard what the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) said.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members are stretching the point. I have made my ruling and have made it clear. I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber will accept that. Perhaps we can now move on.

Mr. John D. Taylor *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that this is a new point of order.

Mr. Taylor: It is to confirm my——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Would the right hon. Gentleman answer my question: is it a new point of order?

Mr. Taylor: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I fully accept your ruling about a statement made from a sedentary position, but that was not the point of order raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), who was referring to an allegation made by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) when he was on his feet. That point of order had nothing to do with the personal allegation that my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) "should be blushing." It was a specific allegation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Had the right hon. Gentleman listened attentively to the whole of my response, he would have heard me say that the Secretary of State and Ministers on the Front Bench would have heard the right hon. Member who raised the separate point of order. I hope that hon. Members will confirm that. Certainly *Hansard* will do so. Perhaps without further ado we can move to the next order.

Northern Ireland (Appropriation)

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): It might be helpful to the House if I make it clear that debate on the order may cover all matters for which Northern Ireland Departments, as distinct from the Northern Ireland Office, are responsible, with the exception of police and security matters.

7.26 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Michael Mates): I beg to move,

That the draft Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 2nd June, be approved.

The draft order, which covers the main estimates for Northern Ireland Departments, authorises expenditure of £2,874 million for the current financial year. Taken together with the sums voted on account in March, this brings the total estimates provision for Northern Ireland Departments to £5,014 million, an increase of 9 per cent. on 1991-92 provisional outturn.

The sums sought for individual services are set out in the estimates booklet which is, as usual, available from the Vote Office. The House will be aware that the estimates for the Northern Ireland Office, for law and order services, are not covered by the order before us today.

As is the custom on these occasions, I shall highlight the main items in the estimates, starting with the Department of Agriculture. The net provision sought in the two agricultural votes amounts to some £152 million, an increase of £8 million over 1991-92. Vote 1 covers expenditure of £33 million by the Department on various market support schemes which operate throughout the United Kingdom. This includes £12 million for capital and other grants to improve farm structures, to stimulate investment on farms and for conservation—£19 million is to support farming in the less favoured areas, by means of headage payments on hill cattle and sheep.

Vote 2 seeks provision of £119 million for local measures to support agriculture, fisheries and forestry. Of that, £53 million is for agricultural, scientific and veterinary services. That covers a wide range of professional and technical services to the industry and reflects the importance of maintaining the highest possible quality of Northern Ireland agricultural products. The sum of £27 million is for arterial drainage, fisheries and forestry—including expenditure on watercourse management, angling development and the management of state forests.

The Department of Economic Development's vote 1 seeks provision of £168 million, which will enable the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland to carry out its role of strengthening the industrial base there and to meet its existing commitments, primarily in the area of selective assistance to industry. The introduction and development of internationally competitive companies, providing the basis for growth in durable employment, is the main aim around which all IDB's activities are centred. Existing companies are being encouraged and assisted to improve their competitiveness in terms of productivity, design, quality and marketing.

In vote 2, £44 million is sought for the Local Enterprise Development Unit—LEDU—Northern Ireland's small business agency. The agency is placing greater emphasis on increasing the number, and improving the competitiveness, of small companies. Recent initiatives include the business start programme, which is aimed at assisting people to set up in business. The number of projects assisted under the scheme will be trebled to some 1,200 this year. Existing businesses will be supported through the business advance programme, which aims to assist some 2,000 local companies to stimulate growth.

Also in vote 2, £9 million is sought for the Industrial Research and Technology Unit, which was launched in March with the aim of improving the competitive edge of Northern Ireland products in an increasingly demanding marketplace. Continuous, well-directed research and innovation are crucial to long-term economic health. The unit will give a greater impetus and sharper focus to Government's activities in that important area of activity.

Finally, in vote 2, £11 million is sought to enable the Northern Ireland tourist board to assist the further development of the tourist industry. Last year, for the third successive year, a record number of visitors—1·18 million—came to Northern Ireland. An 18 per cent. increase in the number of holiday visitors confirms that Northern Ireland is again being considered as a serious contender in the world's holiday markets. The additional funds proposed—nearly £4 million more than last year—will enable the board to build on that success and, in co-operation with all involved in the industry, to realise the potential of the tourism sector to generate additional economic benefits and to create jobs throughout Northern Ireland.

The Department of Economic Development's vote 3 seeks £189 million for the Training and Employment Agency. A sum of £46 million is for the youth training programme to support 12,700 training places. Some £51 million is for the action for community employment programme, to provide 9,600 places for long-term unemployed adults in projects of community benefit. More than £18 million is for the job training programme, which offers training and work experience to unemployed adults. That is £2·3 million more than in 1991-92 and will allow the programme to expand from 3,600 places in March 1992 to 5,400 by March 1993. The sum of £13 million is for the company development programme, which will assist some 225 Northern Ireland companies to improve their competitiveness in external markets.

Since April 1991, more than 34,000 people have been placed in employment after completing programmes provided by the agency. About 35,000 people are currently engaged on various programmes. It is particularly encouraging that 90 per cent. of apprentices on training centre courses enter permanent employment on completion of their training.

A token provision of £1,000 has been taken in vote 4 to cover expenses to be incurred in the privatisation of the Northern Ireland electricity supply industry. A supplementary estimate, covering the actual expenses and proceeds from the sale, will be presented later in the year.

With regard to the Department of the Environment, £169 million is sought in vote 1 for roads, transport and ports. Some £142 million is for the roads programme, to finance the operation and maintenance of Northern Ireland's roads and bridges and for new construction and improvement works.

The Department's vote 2 covers the important area of housing, where £187 million is sought to provide assistance to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and to the

[Mr. Michael Mates]

voluntary housing movement. When net borrowing by the Housing Executive, rents and capital receipts are taken into account, the total resources available for housing will be about £531 million in 1992-93.

The Department's vote 3 provides for water and sewerage services, with gross expenditure in 1992-93 estimated at £152 million. Of that, £98 million is required, mainly, for normal operation and maintenance and £54 million is for expenditure on capital works, including schemes to improve further the quality of drinking water in line with the standards laid down in European Community directives.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): The Minister has said that money has been allocated for the privatisation of the Northern Ireland electricity industry. We are now discussing the water industry. Today, a report in the press said that the Government have decided to proceed immediately with the privatisation of the water and sewerage systems in Northern Ireland. Will the Minister tell us exactly what is happening about the future control of water in the Province?

Mr. Mates: I am aware of the report to which the right hon. Gentleman has referred. The Northern Ireland citizens charter makes clear the Government's intention to privatise the Department of the Environment's water and sewerage functions as soon as practicable. In line with that commitment, the Government are reviewing the timetable for, and the best approach to, the privatisation. It is hoped that we will be able to make an announcement soon.

Also included in vote 4 is £38 million for urban regeneration measures, which will be targeted at areas of social, economic and environmental need. As in previous years, that will generate much higher overall investment through the successful partnerships that have been established with the private sector.

The estimates for the Department of Education seek a total of £1,213 million, an increase of 6 per cent. over last year. Vote 1 includes £743 million for recurrent expenditure by education and library boards, an increase of £54 million over 1991-92. It includes £389 million for school teachers' salaries, which should enable the pupil-teacher ratio to be maintained at present levels. Also included is £237 million for expenditure on schools and on further education services. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), made an announcement about that this morning, when he launched a report on the future structure of further education. The sum of £117 million is for libraries, youth, transport and administration. Vote 1 also seeks £50 million for boards' capital projects, including provision for new laboratories and technology workshops to enable further progress to be made on education reforms. The sum of £6 million is sought for integrated schools and £123 million for voluntary schools.

Vote 2, seeks £266 million including £89 million for universities which will enable them to maintain parity of provision with comparable universities in the rest of the United Kingdom. The sum of £126 million is for student support, including grants and student loans. The vote also covers expenditure on a range of youth, sport, community and cultural activities, including £3 million for community relations.

The next set of votes relate to the Department of Health and Social Services. In votes 1 and 3, total net provision of £1,243 million is sought to maintain and improve the standard of the Province's health and personal social services. This is an increase of £74 million over estimated outturn for 1991-92. Spending on the family health services will be £252 million, while £887 million is for health and social services boards' current expenditure. The sum of £46 million is sought for capital development to maintain a substantial programme of works, including a further £14 million for Antrim hospital.

In vote 3, £385 million is sought for the Department's administration and other costs. That includes £245 million for miscellaneous social security benefits, including housing benefit.

Vote 4 seeks £1,022 million for a range of benefits administered by the Social Security Agency. That is an increase of more than 13 per cent. on last year and includes £187 million for disability benefits, £567 million for income support and £268 million for family and other benefits.

In the Department of Finance and Personnel, vote 3, more than £4 million is sought for the community relations programme. Support for community relations projects, co-ordinated by the central community relations unit and the Department of Education, has increased from about £250,000 in 1986-87 to £7 million in 1992-93. A new feature of the programme in 1992-93 is the provision of suitable venues to encourage greater cross-community contact.

I draw hon. Members' attention to the fact that all the programmes that we are discussing today have one important thing in common. To each of them applies the principles of the citizens charter. The Northern Ireland charter, which was published in February, describes how we plan to raise the standard of public services. That is supported by individual charters for the main customer-oriented services. Those explain in detail what precisely a citizen can expect of the service, what his or her rights are, and what the citizen can do if the service falls below standard.

Our programme in Northern Ireland has been launched with the advantage of a public service whose professionalism and commitment are second to none. I am therefore confident that we shall achieve the charter aim of good service, based on respect for the customer and his or her views.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): It is all very well for the Minister to make that sort of statement and to be applauded for it, but many people in Northern Ireland feel sore about the fact that money is being diverted to the north-south road while other roads that are needed to get us to the ferry and roads around the airport are being insufficiently funded. People are asking why that money should be diverted to the north-south communication, particularly as across the water in Scotland, our neighbour, there is great need for the railway line to be re-opened and for money to be spent on roads there to link with Northern Ireland roads.

Mr. Mates: The hon. Gentleman did not hear that matter being raised in the last debate because he was not in his place. I believe that the issue of roads is likely to

figure at some length in at least one speech to be made in this debate. Roads are the responsibility of the Minister of State who will reply to the debate.

In my opening remarks I have drawn attention to the main provisions of the order. In reply to the debate, the Minister of State will respond to points raised by hon. Members. I commend the order to the House.

7.41 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): I will limit my remarks, to enable hon. Members from the Province to take part in the debate. At the outset I wish, on behalf of my party, to say how pleased we are to see my hon. Friend—I call him "my hon. Friend"—the Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) in his place. I am sure that during his tenure of office all the people of his constituency will be assiduously represented here. I understand that he hopes to speak in the debate.

I read an article in *The Observer* by the Minister of State about his hopes and aspirations for the rejuvenation of the economy of Northern Ireland. I shall concentrate my remarks on economic development and the economic future of Northern Ireland.

Ministers have a long tradition of spreading optimism about the economy of Northern Ireland, none more so than a former Northern Ireland Under-Secretary, the present Minister for Trade, who will be a hard act for the Minister of State to follow. We do not criticise Ministers for spreading optimism. That is part of their job. We are always delighted when Ministers and officials succeed in preserving or obtaining jobs for Northern Ireland, but we cannot allow Ministers to get away with facile optimism.

The Northern Ireland Economic Council published two useful reports in the last three months, one on the European Community structure and the other on economic assessment in Northern Ireland, documents which I hope the Minister has had time to read. Let us hope that Ministers at the Northern Ireland Office reject the scorched earth policy of their colleagues at the Treasury and ensure that the council continues to provide a focus for economic analysis and value to the Government, employees and trade unions. The National Economic Development Council which operated in the rest of the United Kingdom provided such useful information, and I regret its demise.

The Northern Ireland Economic Council's spring economic assessment makes gloomy reading, I regret to say. Indeed, the council admits that it has not produced such a depressing document since the early 1980s. Contrary to the trend in recent years in Northern Ireland, which was relatively insulated from the United Kingdom recession, the council concludes that the United Kingdom's recession exerts

"a depressing grip on local economic conditions in Northern Ireland."

The recession is in many ways worse than the first Thatcherite wrecking job which devastated manufacturing industry. This second wave of destruction spares no sector of the economy and, what is worse, the council is convinced that, when the long-awaited recovery materialises in the rest of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland will lag behind in benefiting from the end of the recession.

In those circumstances, we have a right to expect action, not propaganda, from the Government. Can we expect to see more of the "agit" and less of the "prop" from the Minister? What measures is he taking now to ensure that when the recession ends, Northern Ireland will benefit as much and as rapidly as other regions of the United Kingdom? The Government's self-satisfaction contrasts unfavourably with the vigorous efforts of the CBI in Northern Ireland and of the Confederation of Irish Industry to promote and provide cross-border trade and prepare the island of Ireland, including Northern Ireland, for the single market.

Lest the Minister is in doubt about the seriousness of the crisis which it is his task to resolve, the unemployment figures published this afternoon—14·4 per cent. of the work force unemployed, according to the seasonally adjusted total—are a disgrace anywhere in the United Kingdom, but they are particularly disgraceful in Northern Ireland. In addition, it was announced this afternoon that there will be 400 redundancies at Shorts. That should dispel any complacency that exists in the Department.

In recent weeks, the future of the European Community has received much attention, but we are in danger of neglecting the changes to which we are already committed under the Single European Act and the implementation of the single market. The Northern Ireland Economic Council has provided a salutary reminder that we still have a long way to go to prepare Northern Ireland for the single market, let alone the degree of European unity which Maastricht promised.

Many people in Northern Ireland, not least its elected representatives, will be keen to find out why the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary forgot that they were responsible for Northern Ireland when they agreed to exclude the Province from the cohesion fund agreed at Maastricht. Perhaps the Minister will comment on that.

The NEC points out that, on current trends, Northern Ireland will remain behind the EC average until well into the 21st century. The report concludes that present policies have been inadequate, particularly in relation to the structural funds. Not only has Northern Ireland not gained as much financially as it should have gained from the funds, but there is growing doubt about the effectiveness of the way in which the money is spent.

Receipts from the European social fund have fallen since 1987-88 and little has been done to create the high-tech growth industries which will be the prime beneficiaries of the single market. There is yet to be an integrated approach to rural development to counter balance the expected decline in support for agriculture. The council points to the lack of proper evaluation of programmes to see if they are working and the lack of co-ordination and integration in the various operational programmes.

In addition, it criticises the inadequate, rushed and anti-democratic way in which bids for structural fund support were prepared. What, if anything, do the Government intend to do about that? Can we expect the usual inaction, or can we at least be assured that any elected Provincewide authority that may emerge from the current talks will be associated with the next tranche of structural fund allocations?

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): To put the facts on the table, will the Minister explain why, when the structural funds were increased, Northern Ireland, as an objective 1 region, received an increase of only 9 per cent., whereas the Republic of Ireland received 17 per cent., Portugal 114 per cent. and Greece 171 per cent.? Will the Minister explain

[Mr. John Hume]

why our objective 1 region did so badly and why the Government failed so miserably? Instead of silently staring at me, will the Minister explain why that happened?

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend makes his own point and I have no doubt that the Minister will have heard what he said. I am glad that he made that point because I have referred in detail to my worries about the way in which the structural fund in Northern Ireland has been handled. I have asked why the Northern Ireland economy could not benefit again from the cohesion fund. That is for the Government to answer. Regrettably, we are not on the Government Benches; therefore, it is up to Ministers to answer the questions.

I wish to discuss two other matters. The first can only be described as the rifling of the economic, social and public expenditure programme for the security budget. Such practices are unacceptable and dangerous. The Government should make it clear that the necessary security costs will be met from contingency reserves if necessary, without impinging on other programmes; otherwise, it is tantamount to telling the terrorists that they can win the economic war and make the stakes too high for the British Government. The defence of society against terrorism is beyond price, so any further rifling of other budgets to substantiate and sustain the defence and security budgets is unacceptable.

Secondly, there is much concern about the performance of the industrial development agencies in the Province—the IDB and LEDU—in terms of job creation. The Secretary of State alluded to that earlier. In the public sector, if back office jobs are excluded, only 158 jobs were promoted by the IDB. It is not that we have anything against back office jobs or the public sector, but one does not have to be a Thatcherite to be worried about the excessive dependence on the public sector for employment in Northern Ireland. How does the Minister intend to secure further inward investment in the light of those difficulties?

As someone who, for the past three years, has been banging on the Dispatch box about the vacillation of the British Government and the Republic's Government about the upgrading of the Belfast-Dublin railway line, may I say how pleased I am to hear from the Secretary of State that work on improving that line will commence later this year? Not only is that line symbolic for the island of Ireland, linking Belfast to Dublin, but it makes economic and transportation sense. It also makes sense because of the single market, which is now exercising everyone's attention. It is right that the island of Ireland's economy should begin, to some extent, to integrate financial services, transport infrastructure and power supply. If the island of Ireland, given its peripheral nature in relation to the rest of Europe, is to be at the races in the single market, those things must happen.

I am pleased that gas interconnectors are being provided between Scotland and the island of Ireland. I am pleased also that the Republic is considering an interconnector between Dublin and mainland United Kingdom. Furthermore, I am encouraged to see that the new team at Stormont is keen to resurrect the electricity interconnector between the Republic and Northern Ireland. One should not allow terrorism to stand in the way of economic progress and the unification of the European grid.

Although I have been critical of some of the Government's actions, there have been substantial improvements in economic activity in the Province, largely brought about by Northern Ireland Members through self-help. They have gone out and looked for inward investment in their constituencies, and I pay them credit for doing so.

7.55 pm

Dr. Joe Hendron (Belfast, West): Although two months have passed, I presume that it is still in order to wish you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, well in your new post and a happy four or five years.

The tradition of the House is that new Members pay tribute to their predecessors. My predecessor, the President of Sinn Fein, did not take his seat in this House. Hence west Belfast had no parliamentary representation for nine years. It is fair to say that, because of adverse media coverage, my constituency has been grossly misrepresented to the world at large. A young Belfast student recently gave vivid expression to what I hope will be our shared vision for the future when he wrote:

"in morning sunlight over Belfast, a fragile ray of hope grows bright".

I have been privileged to serve the people of west Belfast—Catholic and Protestant, nationalist and Unionist—as a family doctor for more than 25 years. They are magnificent people and I salute them for their indomitable spirit, resilience in adversity, kindness, courtesy and great sense of humour. When I was elected on 10 April, it was clear to me that, although the vast majority of my votes came from nationalist west Belfast, I nevertheless received a significant number of votes from Unionist-Protestant parts of the constituency. I therefore consider myself deeply honoured that my mandate crossed the sectarian and political divide.

Catholic families on the Falls road have similar problems to Protestant families on the Shankill road in terms of unemployment, inadequate housing, social deprivation and paramilitary intimidation. There is a different political emphasis between the people of the Falls and the Shankill, but I want them all to know that at Westminster I shall act with integrity at all times and represent all of them to the best of my ability with regard to their social, economic and community interests.

The constituency of Belfast, West has one of the most spectacular urban settings in these islands, situated at the edge of the Antrim plateau and dominated by the Divis and Black mountains, which are visible from every part of Belfast. Tradition has it that St. Patrick himself established a Christian church in Belfast in 454 AD, at Sean Chill, which means "the old church" and is anglicised today as "Shankill".

Centuries later, on 14 October 1791, in Crown Entry, off High street—which exists to this day in the constituency—the first Society of United Irishmen was founded by, among others, Wolfe Tone, Henry Joy McCraken and Thomas Russell, with the aim of bringing together all the people of Ireland in a spirit of brotherhood, harmony and toleration of diversity. The late 18th century was Belfast's golden age, with a growing prosperity and a social, cultural and intellectual awakening stimulated by the American and French

revolutions. I pay tribute to the spirit and idealism of those first united Irishmen, and to their noble and non-violent aims that sought to unite all the people in a brotherhood of affection.

Belfast was among the first cities to be influenced by the industrial revolution. There is a 17th-century reference to a corn mill operating at Millfield, a thoroughfare that links the Falls and Shankill road. In the late 19th century a travel writer described Belfast's location as

"an ugly picture in a beautiful frame".

He was referring to the appalling and crowded, two-up, two-down rows of housing in long terraces, with poor sewage and waste disposal facilities that were erected by the mill owners to house the thousands of families who flocked into west Belfast in the aftermath of the great famine of the 1840s. Unhealthy working conditions and overcrowded housing combined with limited medical facilities produced rampant disease and low life expectancy.

The constituency was, I believe, first created for the 1886 general election at the time of the first Home Rule Bill. The first Member of Parliament for West Belfast was Thomas Sexton, a member of the Irish parliamentary party and a close associate of Charles Stewart Parnell. I am honoured to continue the tradition of those who have represented my constituency in the House.

Every hon. Member has a constituency that is unique, but Belfast is peculiarly unique. I do not believe that there is any territory in these islands where people have suffered as much. More people per thousand of the population have died through violence in west Belfast than anywhere else in western Europe; the figure is just over 500. There have been, and continue to be, more people imprisoned in west Belfast per thousand of the population than anywhere else in the islands.

Using the Government's own indicators of social deprivation—the Jarman indices—west Belfast is at the top of the poverty league. The great majority of people living in my constituency and far beyond in Northern Ireland want peace. In particular, they want the paramilitaries off their backs. The Provisional IRA has mounted a continual campaign of violence, murder, intimidation and extortion. Its members have murdered hundreds of people, both civilians and members of the security forces.

The Provos are not defenders of the nationalist people; they do not have a mandate for murder. The vast majority of Irish people—north and south—oppose them. The Sinn Fein leadership tells our people to get up off their knees, while its paramilitary wing blows the knees off our people. I am referring to the knee-cappings of young people involved in alleged anti-social behaviour.

The main loyalist paramilitary organisation—the Ulster Defence Association, better known as the UDA/UFF—has also been responsible for hundreds of murders, mostly innocent Catholics. Their most recent victim was the mother of two young children, Mrs. Philomena Hanna, who was gunned down in her workplace on the Springfield road. Yet the Northern Ireland Office has continually refused to proscribe the UDA.

I demand that the Secretary of State and the Minister of State act immediately to proscribe that organisation. It is inexcusable not to take such action. In the aftermath of the Brian Nelson case, it is important that the faceless men in charge of military and covert operations be made accountable to both the judicial system and public representatives for their actions, as at no time can any life be sacrificed in the interest of security. Other paramilitary organisations that slaughter our people include the Irish People's Liberation Organisation, the Irish National Liberation Army and the Ulster Volunteer Force.

I appreciate that normal policing is impossible because of the IRA campaign of violence. However, the vast majority of the people in west Belfast support impartial policing; they will support the police, provided the police support the people on the ground. Young people who are continually harassed on our streets or who are treated with indignity in interrogation centres might have difficulty in giving such support. Interrogation centres would not be necessary if paramilitary organisations stopped their campaigns of violence. Yet it is morally wrong and counter-productive to ill-treat young people in centres such as Castlereagh. There is ample medical evidence that such ill-treatment has taken place. I have given such evidence. Soldiers who harass young people become recruiting sergeants for the IRA and other paramilitary organisations because they further alienate those same young people.

To the families of all those who have died in Northern Ireland—whether soldiers, policemen or civilians—I extend my sincere sympathy.

Among the greatest trials with which the people of west Belfast have to contend is the scourge of massive unemployment. Notified unemployment in the constituency as a whole is nearly 40 per cent. but in some districts such as Ballymurphy, Turf Lodge and Lower Falls, it has been reported as being more than 70 per cent. It is not unusual to meet families where the males have been unable to obtain gainful employment for two or more generations. Unemployment has always been endemic on the nationalist Falls road, but in recent years the Shankill road has also suffered badly as large companies such as Mackies have gone into decline. In estates such as Glencairn, unemployment is reported to be as high as 60 per cent.

Previous Governments have been guilty of gross neglect. However, in recent years the Make Belfast Work campaign has been having some positive effects. Government agencies such as IDB and LEDU are anxious to help. I accept that there has been an improvement recently, and the position is better than it was three or four years ago. I would like to pay tribute to the former Minister with responsibility for economic development, now the Minister for Trade, who was so genuinely concerned about deprivation in inner city districts particularly in my constituency.

Paramilitary violence has made it difficult to attract inward investment, but a number of companies are anxious to locate in west Belfast. In campaigning to bring employment to my constituency, and so ensuring a decent future for the families and young people of west Belfast, I will spare no effort to speak to any industrialist, lobby any Minister, or make any reasonable representations on behalf of all my constituents.

New and imaginative policies need to be devised—for example, a fiscal initiative that could lead to the adjustment in the rate of corporation tax for inward investment in order to make west Belfast fully competitive with the Irish Republic's 10 per cent. manufacturing tax, and greater attention to training for real jobs. The

[Dr. Joe Hendron]

development of the Springvale initiative is extremely important, and I am pleased to know that there will be first class training facilities for 300 young people.

I pay tribute to the dedication and commitment of the schools and to the generations of teachers, parents and pupils who despite an almost intolerable background of deprivation and for two decades of violence have turned out thousands of highly motivated, well educated and public-spirited pupils. At the same time, far too many young people, through no fault of their own, do not benefit from the education system. That problem must be dealt with as a matter of urgency.

The study of the Irish language and other cultural pursuits are much to the fore in my constituency. The promotion of the Irish language has always been close to the hearts of the people of west Belfast. Cumann Chluain Ard in Hawthorn street has been at the centre of the Irish language revival for more than 50 years, and, at Shaws road, we can also boast the only significant Irish-speaking community in Ireland. Many voluntary bodies, including Glor-nGael, have fostered a vibrant cultural life for Irish speakers in the city.

Recently there has been growing interest in the Irish language in Unionist areas. As we have a shared cultural heritage that is a welcome development. The first Irish language secondary school in Northern Ireland, Meanscoil Feirste, which opened on the Falls road last September, has so far received no Government aid. The Northern Ireland Office accepts the necessity for nursery and primary education in Irish; it is only logical that it should support this school too.

Given the history of violent conflict and social deprivation in west Belfast in the past 20 years it was inevitable that hundreds of our young people would get involved directly or peripherally with paramilitary organisations. It is important that great sensitivity and, when possible, clemency, be shown to republican and loyalist prisoners, especially if their release would not endanger the public. Just as Private Thain, whose crime was committed in west Belfast, was transferred to an English prison before his early release, so Irish prisoners in England should be allowed to serve their sentences in their own country.

It is grossly unfair that prisoners' families should be made to suffer and that they should have to make long and arduous journeys to prisons in Britain over periods of many years. There are many female prisoners from my constituency in Maghaberry prison. They have had to endure the degrading practice of strip-searching, which both they and their families greatly resent. I ask the Secretary of State to intervene immediately to stop that.

I want to refer to a prisoner who is now dead. His name was Guiseppe Conlon. He was a patient of mine who came from the Lower Falls nationalist area of west Belfast. When Mr. Conlon's son Gerard—later to become known as one of the Guildford four—was arrested after the Guildford massacre, his father came to see me in my surgery in Divis street. I still have some of his medical records. Like any father, he was deeply concerned about his son, so later that evening he crossed on the ferry to England to be near Gerard.

Guiseppe Conlon was a sick man with chronic lung disease—he would have been out of breath if he had walked even 100 yards. On top of that he had never been to England, yet he was arrested, charged with making bombs, sentenced and eventually allowed to die in Wormwood Scrubs prison on 23 January 1980.

It did not take a forensic expert or even an intelligent judge to know that Guiseppe Conlon was completely innocent, yet to this day his widow, Mrs. Sarah Conlon —she is a great lady—has never received an apology from the Government or from any relevant authority. She too had to make the long weary trek backwards and forwards to various prisons in England, entirely at her own expense.

There are those in this House who will say that violence in Northern Ireland has been fuelled by hope—the hope that violence will achieve political objectives. That is not my view. Quite the contrary. Violence is fuelled not by hope but rather by despair, and any Member of this House who is prepared to walk the streets of my constituency with me would immediately understand and recognise that despair. If belief in society is diminished, it becomes easier to listen to voices which seek not to accommodate diversity but to eliminate it—hence the despair of young people who are daily humiliated, harassed, insulted and abused by British soldiers in their own streets. Some of these young people are involved in joyriding—joyriding which, night after night, has provoked unprecedented anger and anxiety among the residents of west Belfast.

I deviate from my prepared script at this point to say that I have read quite a bit about joyriding in various parts of England; but it all started in west Belfast. Joyriding is a misnomer. These young people kill themselves and others. Two young joyriders in Belfast were not so much shot dead by British soldiers as riddled with bullets by them. No joyrider has ever been a member of a paramilitary organisation. I have been saying that for years, and I cannot understand to this day why those two young people were shot dead. I have heard nothing more about the soldiers involved, but they were certainly not brought to court. There is an urgent need for a co-ordinated strategy to deal with this terrible problem.

It is the climate of despair which encourages violence because those who feel that despair are easy prey for those who exploit the failure of society to deal with these problems who exploit the anger and who exploit their frustration so as to suck more and more people into the descending spiral of poverty, despair, violence, destruction and economic disintegration.

My task as the Member for West Belfast must be to try to break the vicious circle: to bring hope to the streets of my city; to bring jobs for its unemployed; to bring investment for its decaying infrastructure; to bring a fair and just policy of law enforcement; and, by doing these things, to bring peace to my city.

I need the help of the Government in undertaking this work—indeed, I need the help of every Member of this House who is prepared to help. My constituents have a right to the concern of the Government and of this House. They have a right to a better future than the one which stares them in the face every day when they waken. They have a right to peace, to security, to freedom, to justice and to their fair share of prosperity.

In the words of John Hewitt, the great Belfast poet, in his poem "The Bloody Brae":

"and from that mercy, kindness seized a chance, to weave together the broken halves of this land, to throw his shuttle across the separate threads and make us a glittering web, for God's delight with joy in the placing of colours, side by side."

I pledge myself to the wonderful people of west Belfast, to work for them for as long as they continue to elect me to represent them in this House.

8.19 pm

Sir James Kilfedder (North Down): I listened with great attention to the speech by the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron). His reputation preceded his appearance in the House. Therefore, I was not surprised to listen to a speech imbued with compassion and toleration. I hope that, before he leaves the House, he will see peace restored not only in west Belfast but in every other part of the Province.

The people I represent, the people of North Down, are concerned about what happens in west Belfast, as indeed they are concerned about what happens in every other region of Northern Ireland. The great dilemma for ordinary people in Northern Ireland—a dilemma that is carried on the shoulders of the Government with, perhaps, some agony—is what to do about terrorism.

If one defends people against acts of terrorism one can, as the hon. Gentleman rightly pointed out, alienate people in the community in which those terrorists live. All of us in Northern Ireland must not only pray for an end to terrorism, murder and mutilation, but work and contribute towards bringing peace to our Province. I hope that that peace will come, but it requires an effort on the part of every decent person in the Province who believes in law and order and a future for the young people of Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State, in his sober but hopeful speech this afternoon, referred to the coming single European market and the opportunities that that would provide for Ulster. His remarks were made against a background of 14·3 per cent. unemployment in Northern Ireland. Many of those who are unemployed are in west Belfast, many in the west of the Province, but a considerable number are in my constituency of North Down. Full employment—I echo the words of the Secretary of State—is one of the bases for racial and religious harmony. That is why it is so essential to deal with the terrible scourge of unemployment.

Many of those who are unemployed in North Down are school leavers and young graduates. Unemployment is a dreadful scourge. I hate to see anyone unemployed, but many unemployed people discuss their problems with me —not only the problem of obtaining a job but that of running a home and raising a family on limited means. Unemployment is like a cancer which eats away at the self-esteem of the individual and undermines his morale. For anyone who wants to work it is an appalling experience, and for young people it is devastating. More could be done to attract new industries to the North Down area where, during the past 12 months, unemployment has increased. I therefore ask the Government to consider whether North Down is getting a fair deal in the context of Northern Ireland.

The problem in attracting inward investment is that the terrorist campaign and paramilitary activity result in a lurid and distressing picture of Northern Ireland being broadcast to the people of the United States, Japan and elsewhere. That is how people abroad view the people of Northern Ireland and the situation there. But that is not the true picture. Of course people do die dreadful deaths at the hands of the terrorists, but the majority of people in Northern Ireland go about their daily lives doing their jobs and providing for their families. The picture that should go out is one of a beautiful land full of hope.

I have just received the CBI's special supplement on Northern Ireland. It is an extremely good document which should have the widest possible circulation. Let me quote two paragraphs from one article in the pamphlet. It says:

"If only the outside world would now and again take a closer look at what is going on in Northern Ireland, rather than relying on media reports, it would surely be impressed by both the growing cross-border co-operation and the business achievements.

Because terrorist violence is newsworthy and highly visual and plays on the emotions, its place is assured in the television news coverage that is spread globally by satellite. And because these news bulletins have no time to show anything as undramatic in instant news terms as the positive side of Ulster, the imbalance is perpetuated."

Those who live in the Province realise the horror of terrorism and sometimes suffer at the hands of the terrorists who not only seek to take away life and limb, but wish to bomb more and more people on to the dole queue. The people of Northern Ireland and of west Belfast must realise that terrorism brings grief and suffering regardless of religion, whether Protestant or Catholic; it brings unemployment and all the consequences that the dole means for any person. We cannot ignore the terrorists in Northern Ireland. They kill ruthlessly and without remorse. But all of us must seek to create political stability and business prosperity which is one sound way to counter the terrorist.

Northern Ireland's principal means for publicising the Province's industrial and commercial advantages and attracting investment is the Industrial Development Board, which has been referred to by the Opposition spokesman. I pay tribute to Mr. John McGuckian, who is the dynamic chairman of that board. In the CBI's special supplement, he says:

"Since 1982 when the Industrial Development Board was established, for example, more than a billion pounds of public and private sector money has been invested in large-scale manufacturing projects. To date, this partnership has resulted in the creation of around 30,000 new jobs.

A growing number of these have been in new industries such as medical technology, software development, electronics and tradeable services. The expansion of these industries is playing an important part in off-setting the decline of employment in traditional sectors such as heavy engineering, shipbuilding and linen-making.

I always demand more money for Northern Ireland. As has already been said, Northern Ireland depends to a tremendous extent on public sector employment, on the taxpayer. I recognise that, if money could bring peace to Ulster, that peace would have been bought many times over by the vast amount of taxpayer's money which has been put into the Province. The people of Northern Ireland are grateful for that money, because the Province is a part of the United Kingdom that, for over 20 years, has suffered from one of the cruellest campaigns of terrorism that any people could expect to endure.

I believe that there is an overwhelming case for a devolved Government and assembly at Stormont, where locally elected politicians would assume full responsibility for the allocation and expenditure of taxpayers' money. We must move forward, and to do so we must break the shackles of the past—the shackles of prejudice and hatred —and the mould that unfortunately divides the community into two separate camps.

[Sir James Kilfedder]

I feel hopeful about the future—not just because of the talks, which may succeed or fail. I hope that the people now realise that it is in their hands to achieve some progress by helping the process of reconciliation.

Let me finish by mentioning a problem that I have raised more than once in the House, although the Minister may not know about it: the problem of Mr. Ignatius Geddis's farm, which lies next to Crawfordsburn country park in my constituency. The area is one of great natural beauty, but Mr. Geddis's farm is a dump. I could use worse language, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I do not wish to be reprimanded by you. It is a dump; yet tourists and local residents have to put up with it.

I have the utmost sympathy for those local people, and I put their case to the Minister's predecessor a number of times. The last letter that I received from him said that he would look into the matter again. I invited him to come and see the dump for himself. Let me now extend a warm invitation to the present Minister to come and see the beauties of North Down, and, in particular, this blot on the landscape.

Something must be done. Tourists come to the area from all parts of the world. We have heard about the increase in tourism: 1·9 million people visited the Province in 1991. I do not suppose that they come to see Mr. Geddis's dump, but that is what they see when they visit the country park or walk along the main road to observe the beauties of North Down.

The Minister should either vest the property and hand it over to the country park, or designate the area as environmentally sensitive. As I have said, those who live there have to put up with it, but people who have visited Northern Ireland telephone me afterwards to ask, "Do you know that there is an awful dump in your constituency?" I have to tell them that I have been plaguing the Department of the Environment for years about it.

Our new Minister has a tremendous reputation. I look to him to resolve this awful problem.

8.33 pm

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) on his maiden speech. We look forward to hearing more speeches from him in the future; he is certainly more welcome than his predecessor.

Let me make my usual protest about the disgraceful Order-in-Council method of dealing with Northern Ireland business. The House would be disappointed if I did not do so at the beginning of my speech. Depending on one's mood, the system could be described as a travesty of justice, a pantomime or—quite seriously—a tragedy for all Northern Ireland democrats.

If hon. Members do not mind talking in a vacuum, of course, a host of problems can be aired on such occasions. Usually, we find ourselves listening to a litany of constituency matters. Hon. Members could talk about housing and repairs; on another occasion, the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) talked about chimney flues. They could talk about electricity and the inadvisability of unnecessary privatisation. They could talk about the Department of Health and Social Services and the grants that are supposed to be available but are not available; about the infamous social fund, which is anything but a social fund; about roads and potholes; about lack of lighting, flooding, lack of drainage and the dramatic changes that have taken place in Northern Ireland's education system. Unfortunately, those education changes have done the system no good: it has almost been destroyed, and it is still on its feet only because of the efforts of the teachers.

The hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) talked about planning. We could talk for hours about that —about the non-enforcement of conditions that should be enforced and about the fact that there is no standard planning system throughout the whole of Northern Ireland.

In many ways, using a scatter-gun approach to the order presents the Minister with opportunities to avoid answering awkward questions and to give long-winded explanations of relatively minor points. I refer, of course, to the present Minister's predecessor, as this Minister has only just entered his post.

I intend to concentrate on one of the most important subjects, which was mentioned several times during the previous debate—roads and transportation. I wish to illustrate the complete lack of long-term, consistent, sensible strategy—remembering that the sole responsibility for such matters lies with the Department of the Environment, for which the Minister is responsible.

The so-called block grant tends to encourage the incorrect assumption that Northern Ireland is in a favoured or privileged position vis-a-vis other regions in the United Kingdom. The centralised Government structure and the presence of its enabling bodies or quangos—which were referred to earlier and to which I have often drawn the House's attention—tend to support the misinformed view that seemingly enormous sums are being channelled into every conceivable area of public provision. Yet, when we analyse the expenditure per sector or per project, an entirely different and altogether more accurate picture emerges.

In respect of roads, transport and ports, the Government have stated their objectives clearly in their booklet "Northern Ireland Expenditure Plans and Priorities", Cm 1917, published in February 1992. No sensible or reasonable person could object to those objectives. The first is to

"operate and maintain the road system efficiently and economically, with due precedence being given to the main traffic route network".

That is fine. The second is to

"make the most effective use of the existing road system through appropriate traffic management arrangements".

That is fine. The third is to

"improve and develop the road system".

That is fine. Another objective is to

"make it safe for all road users."

That is to be supported.

I accept that it is not necessary for all works to have been completed yesterday, but, I challenge the system by which priorities and expenditure are determined. I do not wish to take up too much time but I must illustrate my point. The Department of the Environment published a sequence of priorities from 1987 to 1991. In 1987, according to parliamentary answers, it was said that work on the Killead bypass should start in 1989-90. Since then, it has been pushed back continually and it is now due to

start in 1995-96. Stage 2 of the A26 dualling was a priority in 1987 and was due to start in 1989-90. Work on it, too, has been pushed back and is now due to start in 1995-96.

The Newry bypass roads, in another constituency, were mentioned in the Department's programme for the first time in 1988. Stage 2 was due to start in 1991-92, but now stage two, the bridge is due to start in 1992-93 and stage three, the road, is due to start in 1993-94. Therefore, work on two roads that were priorities in 1987—the Killead bypass and the A26—has been pushed back to 1995-96, whereas work on the Newry bypass roads, which were not included until 1988, is due to start two or three years earlier.

If those facts are not a clear example of inconsistency or something more sinister, it could be said that Denmark is an enthusiastic member of the European Community. In the interests of other hon. Members, I shall refrain from presenting further instances of inconsistency, underfunding, the development of exotic—rather than vital—projects or worse.

Northern Ireland's economic arteries remain our sea routes to the United Kingdom. When the channel tunnel opens, Great Britain will no longer have to contend with the difficulties that occur at present on its shortest sea route to the continent. In contrast, Northern Ireland will continue to compete under that disadvantage. Our tourist and commercial lines of communication will continue to be our recognised sea routes to Belfast: Larne and Warrenpoint handle about 80 per cent. of our tonnage between them, and our other ports handle the remaining 20 per cent.

That is a sufficient handicap without being faced with the totally inadequate through routes from Scottish and English ports. Hon. Members representing north-west England or south-west Scotland constituencies are only too aware of the fundamental difficulties experienced on the A74 and A75. It would be hypocritical of us to criticise the Scottish Office or the Department of Transport about those roads while we tolerate the shortcomings of Northern Ireland's internal infrastructure.

We welcome the construction of the cross-harbour link, but one little thing has been forgotten. It will be unfortunate if that link means that the Belfast terminal will be in a less suitable location for foot passengers. In 1990, 2,245,000 tonnes came in through the port of Larne and 1,756,000 tonnes went out. In addition, 178,026 vehicles came in through that port and 170,113 went out. It was reported in 1986—I know that it has changed now—that Larne accounted for 85 per cent. of the passenger traffic by sea into and out of Northern Ireland and one third of all surface passengers into and out of the island of Ireland.

Therefore, it seems odd that there is no mention of Larne's chief approach road, the A8, in the Department of the Environment's priorities. It has not been mentioned since 1987. The A8 must be upgraded to the proper standard before the number of accidents increases out of control. If the Minister feels that that cannot be justified under the Government's investment appraisal criteria, perhaps he will make a case for the A8 in Northern Ireland and the A75 in Scotland to be considered as a single route and accorded similar status to that apparently received by the north Wales A5-A55 corridor. The generous investment allocated to the Welsh corridor might then be applied to the north channel, including the A8.

The Government have disregarded that vital point of economic integration. They will claim that Northern Ireland's infrastructure and roads are of a high standard. I challenge that on two points. First, one sees that our road system has survived even the confusion of the Department of the Environment's year-on-year priority list. Secondly, relatively short, but key, sections of access roads require major upgrading. I have already mentioned the A8 to Larne, which is an essential road. I remind the House of the A26, which forms a bottleneck between the north-west and the area hospital in Antrim, the north-west and the international airport, and the north-west and the M2. That is followed closely by the Killead bypass, which blocks the access road from the south to the international airport. However, despite both difficulties, that airport handled 2·25 million passengers and 23,719 tonnes of freight in 1990.

Almost everyone, except the Department of the Environment—by that I mean the Ministers up to the present—recognise that the conditions on those sections of road are detrimental to the well being of everyone in Northern Ireland. Earlier in my remarks, I referred to the inconsistency of the Department of the Environment's priorities, which succeeded in giving greater priority to the Newry bypass roads by pushing back the legitimate claims of recognised bottlenecks at Killead, the A26 and the A8 to Larne. The A8 to Larne carries 13,800 vehicles per day, whereas the road to Dublin through Newry carries 6,000 per day.

Why has the policy changed, and who changed it? Why, suddenly, are connecting roads to the Republic a higher priority than Northern Ireland's roads? Where is the logic in completing roads that, after crossing the border, will grind to a halt because the routes with which they link will not be able to cope with the traffic in the foreseeable future? Let us get our own house in order in Northern Ireland before bending over backwards to please another country. If the Government are not prepared to do that, the only conclusion that the people of Northern Ireland will reach is that this is being done for political rather than investment reasons.

I remind the Minister that he is responsible for the roads of Northern Ireland and our connections with the rest of the United Kingdom. We expect him to carry out his responsibilities to the Northern Ireland travelling public—our commercial traffic, our business men and women and, above all, United Kingdom citizens who live in Northern Ireland.

That responsibility extends to our other major concern —expenditure on maintenance. Dr. Snaith's recent report found that 1,000 miles of road in the Province is decaying at an alarming rate. Northern Ireland Members of all parties did not require a report to tell them that. We have all complained about such matters in debates on appropriation orders. Perhaps our new Minister will resolve the situation.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Is my hon. Friend aware that, although Dr. Snaith's report was apparently made available to the road service headquarters, we have not seen it? I telephoned the Minister's office two or three weeks ago to ask whether a copy could be made available to me, but I am still waiting. Perhaps we could be made aware of the present situation, especially as one of the report's recommendations was that lightly used roads could be dispensed with and abandoned. One

[Mr. William Ross]

wonders what effect that would have on some of the difficulties that are experienced in rural areas in trying to get our little-used roads kept up to scratch.

Mr. Forsythe: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention, with which I agree. It reminds me of when I tried to get information about quangos, only to be referred to a book in the Library, which could not give me the information that I required. Perhaps the Minister, who, I am sure, heard what my hon. Friend said, will take that into consideration.

I return to my remarks about the incorrect assumption regarding the block grant. In England and Wales, £12,500 per mile is spent on maintaining trunk roads, yet the figure in Northern Ireland is £3,700 per mile. For all roads, the figure in England and Wales is £3,180 per mile and in Northern Ireland £1,910 per mile. Dr. Snaith's report says:

"However, in the absence of criteria similar to those used for the appraisal of capital schemes being used when planning expenditure on maintenance, it is difficult to be certain that the most cost-effective decisions have been taken when Roads Service allocates funds to capital schemes rather than to maintenance work."

That may account for what has been happening and may suggest trouble for the future. As roads maintenance has remained almost static since 1979, will the Government accept that the Comptroller and Auditor General has made a valid criticism in drawing attention to the importance of the road structure to business in the Province?

8.54 pm

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to deal with matters that are vital to the people of Northern Ireland, particularly the people of the constituency that I have been honoured to represent.

I should like to take the opportunity to congratulate the hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) on the honour that he received in Her Majesty's birthday honours list. I listened carefully to his speech, especially to the part about the new site that will now be a tourist attraction. As I plan to visit his constituency at the weekend, I must obtain the address so that I can share with him some of the beauties to which he drew the House's attention. He has now identified a tourist spot for the future and probably will charge because of the help that he has given in putting the place on the map.

My colleagues and I will not divide the House on the order, because we are delighted to receive funds for the Province. The usual inference that is drawn in these debates, especially by hon. Members from England and Scotland, is that Northern Ireland is given preferential financial treatment. One of the reports to which I shall refer shows that that is in the minds of certain right hon. and hon. Members. I trust that, tonight, appreciation will be expressed where it is due and that certain matters that need a response will be drawn to the Minister's attention.

I represent a large rural constituency. Farming is vital to the district. Indeed, many of our people are employed in the agricultural industry and we hold it very dear. We want to ensure that decisions to be taken by the Government —not only here but in Europe—will be taken with the best interests of the farming community at heart and that no decisions taken in the Councils of Europe will destroy or harm it.

I congratulate the new Minister of State, the hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) on his appointment and I hope that he will gather much enjoyment from his dealings with the matters that we raise and from seeing some of the most beautiful countryside that any Minister could see—of course, I include North Down as well as the constituencies of my right hon. and hon. Friends and my own.

Some time ago, I had a meeting at Dundonald house with worried farmers and the then Minister responsible for agriculture. The farmers were worried about the meat industry and a problem being introduced into the industry by a few of their number. The deputation was to deal specifically with the problem of what is known as angel dust. Will the new Minister assure me that his Department will make certain that the problem is stamped on with resolve and determination, and that the greedy and miserable people who are putting such a vital industry in jeopardy will be removed from that industry?

If a rogue doctor were to use practices which were not accepted by his profession, he would be removed from the list of practitioners. I believe that resolute action must be taken against farmers who are willing to put the whole industry into the melting pot for financial gain. The matter must be handled with great determination. The principle officer in the Department referred to the issue on radio and television. I pay tribute to the manner in which he dealt with the subject and trust that his resolve will be carried through into action.

I welcome the moneys allocated under the Department of Agriculture's vote 2 for the Omagh flood defence—£1,705,000 this financial year and £1,575,000 to complete the project. Will the Minister assure me that the project will be carried out and that the Department of Agriculture will work hand in hand with the Department of the Environment so that this matter, which has caused great concern and trouble around Campsey right down to Omagh, will be attended to once and for all? I hope that the moneys allocated will be spent wisely and will resolve the problem.

I appreciate the fact that before the previous Minister left office, he announced the finances that the Department would be making available. He assured me that he would endeavour to get the Department of the Environment and his Department to work hand in hand so that the best possible use of the moneys would be made. Therefore, I ask the present Minister to give me the same unequivocal assurance.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is sad that there is now no Minister to answer directly to us in the House for the largest industry in Northern Ireland —agriculture—and that the representative is in another place? Does he agree that it does not bode well for agriculture that we have no direct access to the Minister responsible?

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Robert Atkins): I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand that the Under-Secretary of State who participates regularly will speak about these issues in the House and will listen carefully to what hon. Members of all parties have to say. I hope that all hon. Members will

recognise that representation of their worries and interests will not diminish because my hon. Friend will convey messages as necessary to my noble Friend in another place.

Rev. William McCrea: I thank the Minister for his information. My hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) was pointing out that he and many people genuinely believe that it would have been better if, as in the past, the Minister responsible for such an important industry were answerable at all times, thus enabling all Members of Parliament from the Province to have immediate contact with him on the Floor of the House. However, I have no doubt that the Minister who will answer will take up those matters and I trust that there will be close consultation throughout his period in office.

Money has been allocated for the Omagh flood defences, yet no moneys have been allocated to the Castlederg flood defences. The people there have endured an intolerable situation, and the Minister who was previously responsible for agriculture received a delegation on their behalf. It is vital that that matter should be dealt with, and I ask that it be passed to the Minister now responsible for agriculture for immediate action. I trust that it will be resolved—that the money will be spent in Castlederg, which has suffered much.

I listened to the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) talking about his constituency, but no-one can deny that the Castlederg area has suffered more than any other rural small town on the verge of the United Kingdom. The matter must be resolved. That will take money, but I trust that the money will be allocated urgently.

With regard to the schedule on the Department of Economic Development, it gives me no joy to tell the House that my constituency has the second highest unemployment in the United Kingdom. That is a tragedy; it ought not to happen. It causes me grave concern, bearing in mind the fact that we are in the middle of a recession. It is true that the recession did not hit the Province at the same time as the rest of the United Kingdom, but our people fear that when the recession has been lifted everywhere else and the rest of the kingdom faces brighter days, Northern Ireland will still be affected. I trust that that will not happen, but unfortunately it has always happened in the past.

I urge the Government to act. Our community needs jobs—it is crying out for them. I trust that Cookstown and the rest of Mid-Ulster will enjoy the necessary financial injection.

I asked the Minister whether a study could be made of the amounts of money spent on industrial development in the Mid-Ulster constituency compared with that spent in other constituencies. Few large industrial enterprises have been directed towards or have invested in Mid-Ulster. We have to rely on the local community, with small industries mushrooming. Local enterprise is healthy, and I respect and give great credit to those who have faced the challenge and moved forward—but we need inward investment. We need to look further afield, and there have been disparities between the finances coming into Mid-Ulster and those coming into other constituencies. Other constituencies are closer to the ports, and we are far away, so it is vital that additional finance is made available for industries that might consider coming to constituencies such as mine.

My hon. Friend the Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) spoke about another important problem which has hit the headlines—the closure of Coats Vyella in the Magherafelt area. The Minister is well aware of the great concern. Some 560 jobs were lost in Magherafelt with just a crack of the finger. Other jobs are in the balance. I ask the Department to ensure that not one stone is left unturned in securing other jobs in the Magherafelt area which are in the balance. If the Department do not take effective measures to help us in creating and keeping jobs in the area, we may find ourselves in an industrial wasteland.

The Magherafelt area and my constituency generally have suffered greatly from the threat of terrorism and from the disaster of terrorism. The terrorism continues to the present. In recent days, the IRA has continued the bombing campaign in my constituency. That is why I hope that every arm of government will move forward together —the security forces with every other arm of government —to ensure that we bring stability and an end to social deprivation for the people of Mid-Ulster.

To allow industry to move forward, we need proper expenditure on energy. There must be a fair deal in the allocation of money for job creation in various areas. We need further help from the Industrial Development Board and from the Local Enterprise Development Unit in job creation.

Recently many jobs were lost at the Tyrone and Fermanagh hospital. Mental patients used to be treated at the hospital, but more patients are now treated outside hospital. There is a beautiful site there which will be left vacant. I ask that the Government take action to ensure that the hospital does not lie vacant and become derelict. I ask that offices should be opened there and Government jobs put in.

It is true that the Government have said recently that they would direct public sector jobs from Belfast to the city of Londonderry. The hospital building in Omagh, the county town of Tyrone, should not be left derelict, but filled with proper public sector jobs and other developments. The site is massive and I do not want to see it left derelict.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am sure that my hon. Friend is concerned about the county town of Omagh. There seems to be a conspiracy to attack the town. There is the whole hospital controversy. I know that my hon. Friend has invited the leaders of the three parties to take part in a deputation on the issue. This large building in the middle of Omagh could be used, yet no push or energy seems to be put into getting tenants for it. Will my hon. Friend reveal to us his anxiety about what is really happening in the Omagh area?

Rev. William McCrea: I thank my hon. Friend for his helpful intervention. I am deeply concerned about the whole life of the Omagh district and about the rest of the area, including Cookstown, Castlederg and the part of Magherafelt which is in my area. I am dealing with the specific matter of Omagh, which is vital and which is a matter for the Department of Health and Social Services.

The hospital building used to be used for those who were mentally ill. Many employees were then removed from there. We now face a new and serious problem and Omagh certainly needs help. My friend in that area, Councillor Oliver Gibson, prepared an excellent dossier on rural development in and around Omagh. I trust that the Minister will take care to read it. It was certainly

[Rev. William McCrea]

forwarded to his Department. A beautiful document was also prepared on the former Tyrone and Fermanagh hospital. There is an urgent need to find tenants for the building. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North for his assistance in that matter.

I move on to the Department of the Environment. Once again, we face serious problems in the Mid-Ulster constituency. I listened with care to the hon. Member for Belfast, West speaking about the needs of his constituency. I welcome him presenting the case for west Belfast. But I inform the Minister that we shall monitor carefully what happens to Government finances because it is feared that they go in certain directions, to the detriment of other constituencies. I certainly will not stand back and see Government resources pumped into west Belfast in an effort to court the people away from Sinn Fein. I will not allow my constituency, which has been a base for Sinn Fein support in the past, to fall by the wayside. I assure the Minister that there will be strong protest if finances are handled unfairly.

We have all received a document entitled "Department of the Environment: Structural Maintenance of Roads". I have that document before me and I should like to read out part of the review of structural maintenance in Northern Ireland. The report tells us the mileage of roads in each area—Ballymena 2,000 miles; Belfast 1,000 miles; Coleraine 2,000 miles; Craigavon 3,000 miles; Downpatrick almost 2,000 miles; Omagh 4,800 miles.

The report was ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 6 February 1992. It itemises the major findings of Dr. Snaith's report of December 1986. It says:

"A high percentage of the roads in Northern Ireland were coming into the last quarter of their lives. Over the next few years rapid deterioration would become increasingly evident and, in the Omagh Division, serious deterioration had already occurred."

People usually say that Northern Ireland has more money spent on it than any other area. Let us examine the document. In 1987-88, £12,526 per mile was spent on maintaining trunk roads, excluding motorways, in England and Wales, compared with £3,669 in Northern Ireland. The expenditure on all roads in England and Wales was £3,181 per mile compared with £1,961 in Northern Ireland. That is not some statistic that I have thought up. We are always told that Northern Ireland receives more than the rest of the kingdom, and that money is pumped in. Yet £12,526 per mile was spent on maintaining trunk roads in England and Wales, compared with £3,669 in Northern Ireland. It is up to the Minister to fight for Northern Ireland. It is up to the Minister and the Northern Ireland Office to fight to change that discrepancy.

The report goes on to tell us some interesting facts. It gives the maintenance backlog from 1985 to 1989 and the cost in millions. In the Ballymena area, there was a £7·74 million backlog in 1985; in 1989 it was £2·85 million. In Belfast, the backlog was £13·13 million in 1985 and £5·18 million in 1989. In Coleraine, in 1985 it was £6·69 million, and in 1989 it was £6·10 million. In Craigavon, the backlog was £13·2 million in 1985, and £9·15 million in 1989. In Downpatrick, the backlog was £14·56 million in 1985 and £9·77 million in 1989. In Omagh, the backlog was £22·45 million in 1985, and £25·33 million in 1989.

In the years between 1985 and 1989, the Omagh division was the only area to have an increased maintenance backlog. We are sick, sore and tired of seeing yellow marks on the roads. The Government Department pays an official to put a yellow mark around potholes, but that does not mean that they will be attended to. I could take hon. Members to places where holes have been marked four time but have never been filled. I am not sure whether the Department of the Environment roads service intends to fill the holes with yellow paint, but I can tell the Minister it does not do the trick.

I am telling the House that—on the basis of that Government report—I am sick, sore and tired of being discriminated against, and of my constituents being discriminated against. It is about time things changed.

During the recent election campaign, a member of the Social Democratic Labour party said that the wonderful roads in the Foyle constituency stopped when one reached Mid-Ulster, and he used that against me for political purposes. I ask the Minister to tell me why there are beautiful roads in Foyle, which has an SDLP Member of Parliament when, between 1985 and 1989—during the time that I represented the constituency—there was an increased backlog in Mid-Ulster? The party of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) raised that matter, and the situation must now be changed. I demand that moneys be redirected. If there have to be pull-backs, they certainly should not be in my constituency, because the problems there must be rectified.

I am making a demand and I assure the House that I shall not stop—I shall mention the problem again and again until everyone is sick of it and something is done. I shall not allow the people of Mid-Ulster to be left with nothing but humps, hollows and holes in second-class roads, when other areas have such lovely roads. We shall have justice and it is about time that we saw some action.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Minister should give an assurance that the shortfall in the hon. Member's constituency has not resulted in contractors not being paid for work done, and that that is not the reason why the potholes have not been filled?

Rev. William McCrea: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention, and I should be interested to hear the Minister's answer.

I am not looking for some magical answer tonight. I would rather have a clear, definite and in-depth answer. I want the Minister to tell me about the money being spent on roads in the Mid-Ulster constituency and to tell me what has been spent in the other 16 constituencies. We shall have a wee bit of equality. We hear a lot of huff and puff about discrimination, and all the rest of it, but it is time for the whole can of worms to be opened and for us to find out what is happening in the Departments. It is about time officials answered for the way in which they have been handing out money or making recommendations about our roads.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Is it not a shame that we have been told that it is all right to close the maternity unit in Omagh because it is claimed that the roads are so good that the women can be transported across them to Enniskillen? Is it not a disgrace that, despite the fact that some roads are not in good condition on the Department of the

Environment's own confession, another Department has said that they are so good that one can close the maternity unit in Omagh hospital and take everyone to Enniskillen?

Rev. William McCrea: I thank my hon. Friend for his helpful intervention.

The Department's report speaks for itself and I simply present its findings, of which every hon. Member has a copy. The document, which contains the conclusions reached by Dr. Snaith, states:

"A high percentage of roads in Northern Ireland were coming into the last quarter of their lives. Over the next few years, rapid deterioration would become increasingly evident and, in the Omagh Division, serious deterioration had already occurred."

The Omagh division has received extra money to deal with its maintenance backlog when every other division has received less. In Omagh, the funds allocated have risen from £22·45 million to £25·33 million. The total backlog is worth £58·38 million, and it is interesting to note that practically half of that sum has been given to the Omagh division. Answers need to be given by the Departments and officials better come up with good ones because we will not stand for any more false claims on the matter. It is about time that we had a fair crack of the whip and a proper allocation of finances. We will not accept anything less.

The Government say that they want to encourage new jobs, and it is disgraceful that Magherafelt bypass, which is urgently needed, has still not been built. We have been waiting for that bypass for years and years. It is necessary, because the roads are chock-a-block as people try to get through. The lack of a bypass is hindering the industrial development of an area that is on the verge of becoming an industrial wasteland.

We are crying out for a bypass in Cookstown, but again the work will be delayed. The second phase, the completion, of the Omagh bypass and the Newtonstewart bypass are also urgently needed. They are all in my constituency. We urgently need money to be spent.

We need to improve the Coagh to Stewartstown road. The environment and the roads in Sion Mills in my constituency are a disgrace after so many years. The Department must give us not only answers and promises, but clear action.

I welcome the provision of the finances for education, but there are two many mobile classrooms in my constituency. Other hon. Members will say that that is true in their constituencies. My constituency has an increasing number of disgruntled and angry students, who wish to continue their further and higher education. Because of the lack of a proper grant system, they are unable to do that. When we consider the amount of money that is spent on students from the Irish Republic and the assistance given to them, we begin to worry about our people from the United Kingdom and their chances of continuing their further and higher education.

I warn the Minister that there is alarm and concern in my constituency about grants. We should be encouraging our young people, especially in Mid-Ulster, where there is so much unemployment, to stay on at school and get the best education that we can possibly give. It is not enough to say that that is what we would like. It costs money to put that into action. Therefore, I make a further appeal to the Government tonight.

I must again raise the case of a former teacher in Cookstown, Mr. Crozier. I have raised this matter with every Minister since I entered this place, but I regret to say that no action has yet been taken. Mr. Crozier believes that he was done a terrible injustice, and I continue to be concerned about the matter as I read letters and documents about it. It is time that the Government agreed to carry out an inquiry into the whole issue. Let all the books be opened at an independent inquiry.

We have had the Birmingham Six, and many other cases have been looked at afresh. Mr. Crozier's case should be examined in that light, with openness. It should be investigated, not by those who in the past have had a vested interest, but by an independent inquiry. Will the Government allow an independent inquiry into the case of Mr. Frederick Crozier? I have been dealing with the case for years. I have gone cap in hand to every Minister. I have written hundreds of letters to, among others, the Prime Minister, the heads of the civil service, people in the DPP's office and raised the issue at meetings with the RUC. Let us bring the matter to a conclusion by examining independently the injustice that Mr. Crozier feels he has suffered, and put the case to rest once and for all.

Hon. Members will not be surprised when I raise a health and social services matter that causes me grave concern. I refer to the maternity services at the Tyrone county hospital. Many representations about the matter have been made and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North said, we hope to continue making representations. Of three leaders, I have yet to speak to one, but the other two have agreed to take part in a delegation to the Earl of Arran.

The consultant medical staff at the hospital wholeheartedly support the Government's citizens charter and hope that it will be applied to the maternity services in Omagh. The charter aims to improve quality and make services more responsive to the needs of citizens. That aim is unlikely to succeed if the decision of the western health and social services board to remove the present maternity services from Tyrone county hospital is ratified.

I fully understand the concern of the people of the county town of Omagh about the removal of those services. About 37,000 people have signed a petition urging the retention of their maternity services at that hospital. As they say, that service has existed for years. I ask the House to support the people of the area, and throughout Fermanagh, in ensuring that the existing services are retained.

Tyrone county hospital at present offers a high quality, comprehensive maternity service with a high standard of personal care and attention resulting from being a small rurally based unit serving its own community. The citizens charter says that citizens have an opportunity to influence decisions made on their behalf. The area health council, the body that represents the local citizens, has recommended the maintenance and upgrading of both the Tyrone county and Erne units. Although 37,000 people have signed that petition, thereby making their voices heard, the Western health and social services board has decided to close the Omagh maternity unit.

That is a despicable disgrace. The decision has been taken by one of the quangos that is answerable to no one. The public representatives have been removed from what used to be the boards. Now, each of the members are totally unanswerable to the general public. I deplore that, because it is not democracy but a complete denial of democracy. I demand that we allow democracy to work again for my constituents.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will not my hon. Friend deplore publicly, in this House, how that was done? One hospital against another, one maternity unit against another, and one group of neighbours against another. Then, once the controversy was going between the two hospitals, they decided on the one in Enniskillen. Is not that a disgraceful way to deal with public health, especially with pregnant mothers who are about to bring new life into the world? Is it not a disgrace that hospitals have been set at one another's throats?

Rev. William McCrea: I thank my hon. Friend for his interjection. I wholeheartedly support what he says.

It is vital that the citizens charter, which makes commitments about quality, responsiveness to need, patients' choice and value for money, should be applied. No sooner was the citizens charter printed—the ink had not even dried—than the first action was taken to deny patients' choice and not give citizens their rights. For example, there is no evidence that the removal of the Omagh hospital maternity service will improve quality. Instead, accessibility to the vast majority of people will be decreased. Responsiveness to need lessens rather than improves. As for value for money, what evaluation of value for money has been made? What costings have been done concerning the proposed change? If any have been done, will the Minister make them available in *Hansard* so that everyone can scrutinise them?

I regret that the management unit choose to ignore rather than listen to my constituent's cry from the heart. The doctors in my constituency aim to provide the best service possible and strive to improve the standard of medical care available to all our citizens. They support wholeheartedly the retention of services in the Omagh and Erne maternity units.

Many problems deeply worry my constituents. The matters that I have laid before the House deserve attention. For example, the Cookstown adult centre deserves financial aid. Promises have been made to have that adult centre established in Cookstown to cater for the needs of the ever increasing mentally handicapped adult population in the Cookstown area. Promises, promises, promises—but nothing else. It is about time that promises were put into action. I trust that tonight the trend will be turned.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): We must draw the argument to its logical conclusion. The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) has exposed the inadequacies of the Western area health board. It goes to the crux of the problem in Northern Ireland. As the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) rightly said, the board is a quango. Its members are appointed by a Conservative Minister from England who is not elected by the people of Northern Ireland or answerable to them. None of the members of that quango are answerable to the people of Northern Ireland. The members of that Western health board, like those of other boards, are interested only in serving the Minister because he appoints them.

How can the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster be surprised that the board makes decisions that are not in the interests of the people whom he represents? He should not be surprised, as that is the natural consequence of the evil system of government that exists in Northern Ireland today. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join me when I say that I have no confidence in the western health board serving the interests of his constituents.

Rev. William McCrea: I join the hon. Gentleman in saying, without equivocation, that I have no confidence in that board. Many of those who were appointed to it were unknown to the Minister. They were Government civil servants who were usually chosen on personal preference. It is strange that they seem to come from one political party which cannot get a Member elected to the House. They are usually political rejects who have stood before the general public and been refused by them. Those are the credentials of many of those who have been appointed by Government Departments.

I do not believe, and nor should the House, that such a system is democratic, and the mother of Parliaments should be ashamed of it. It is about time that power was put back in the hands of the ordinary, good people of Ulster. That is why my hon. Friends and their parties are seeking a devolved Government in Northern Ireland to attempt to bring back power. If that were to happen, an electric shock should run through a number of people who have looked to civil servants and Government Departments to be assured of their fancy positions. I must make it abundantly clear that the day when the skids go under the heels of some of the civil servants who are party to the system may not be far off. They may have to answer for some of the sins of the past that they have committed on the hard-pressed people of Northern Ireland.

It seems that it was not enough to insult the people of Northern Ireland by taking away their Parliament and robbing them of democracy in every sense of the word, they replaced officials with 'yes' people who carry out Government wishes and philosophy. It is an absolute disgrace that they would even rob a mother about to bear her child of the right to give birth in her local district under the excellent service that has stood the test of time. I defy any hon. Member to say that Tyron county hospital and its maternity services have not stood the test of time and are willing to face the challenge of the future. I guarantee that they will do so with great determination and skill.

9.43 pm

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) on his maiden speech. If he continues to represent his electorate as he did tonight, I have no doubt that west Belfast will have a constitutional politician in the House for many years.

I welcome the opportunity provided by this debate to raise a number of issues affecting my constituency and the rest of Northern Ireland. As has been said, this is a wide-ranging debate.

We are voting money to the Department of Agriculture. I urge the Minister with responsibility for agriculture to consider the problems throughout the Province arising from the cost to farmers of disposing of fallen animals. A real threat to public health is caused by the irresponsible dumping of carcases and by unsatisfactory burial sites on farms. I pay tribute to the vast majority of farmers who accept responsibility for the cost of the disposal of their fallen animals, but I regret that too often carcases end up on roadsides and even on our beaches, so the cost of disposal is transferred from the polluter to the ratepayer.

Is the Department of Agriculture monitoring this problem; and has the Minister any new proposals to

overcome the problem of the unlawful disposal of dead animals? Must we rely solely on local detection and the prosecution of offenders who are caught?

The fishing season is well under way in Northern Ireland, as is silage-making throughout the Province, with its attendant risk of the seepage of effluent into water courses and rivers. Many visitors are attracted by opportunities to fish our many rivers and lakes, where angling skills are rewarded by fine catches. We have clean rivers and lakes, teeming with trout and salmon, and they continue to attract tourists from Great Britain and overseas.

We must closely supervise fishing at all times, however, to ensure that there is no poaching that would prevent salmon from getting upriver to spawn, and to ensure the early detection of pollution which could result in large fish kills.

I also hope that there are adequate controls on and supervision of salmon netting offshore, to protect the salmon that ought to go upriver. That in turn will maintain stocks.

The money allocated to the Department of Economic Development includes provision for the administrative costs of the executive of the Industrial Development Board. Does the Minister agree that it would be unwise to blame the IDB solely for the small number of new inward investment projects attracted to Northern Ireland in 1991-92? Does he accept that each Member of Parliament representing a Northern Ireland constituency is anxious to assist the IDB to become more successful in the years ahead?

With a record low number of new jobs from incoming projects last year—apart from the 350 office jobs provided by the public sector—surely this is the time for the IDB to offer opportunities for greater participation in attracting inward investment to the elected representatives of the constitutional parties in this House. Does the Minister agree that evidence of cross-party encouragement and support for IDB efforts can only contribute to achieving more success in future? I am satisfied that all right hon. and hon. Members would readily and jointly assist IDB officers if invited to promote investment in Northern Ireland.

We all want full employment right across the community—with the proviso that appointments are made on merit. Is the Minister satisfied that the policy of the Government, the Department of Economic Development, the IDB and the Local Enterprise Development Unit, which is designed to increase competitiveness among Northern Ireland companies, is effectively securing jobs and providing sound conditions for expansion while also attracting outside companies that wish to invest in Northern Ireland?

I regret to have to say that some would-be investors, potential IDB and LEDU clients, from Great Britain and overseas have not been impressed in the past with some officials. A potential LEDU client told me that he had got his business off the ground successfully without any assistance from LEDU—in his own words, "no thanks to LEDU". A potential IDB client concluded that the procedures that IDB follows are so time-consuming and frustrating that they create a never-ending process. All he needs is an offer which can compete with other regions in Europe.

LEDU and IDB officials cannot go on suspecting that each new overseas investor who comes forward is yet another De Lorean. Entrepreneurs are real risk takers. Some have positively chosen to locate in Northern Ireland because of the excellence of its industrial relations, the high quality of its education and skills training provision, the excellent reputation of its universities and the high quality of the work being done in our further education colleges. In addition, they have been impressed by the friendliness of the people of Northern Ireland, their willingness to do a fair day's work for a fair day's pay and, above all—a matter of great regret—the almost unlimited pool of skilled labour that is available.

What recent evaluation has been carried out to determine whether incentives presently on offer compare favourably with those on offer throughout the United Kingdom and the EC? I take this opportunity to record my congratulations on and appreciation of the success enjoyed by F. G. Wilson Engineering Ltd. of Newtownabbey in my constituency. It is the largest manufacturer of diesel engine generating plant in Europe. The company has provided steady and increasing employment for 500 people in the Newtownabbey area. The prospect of the company's expansion on the recently acquired GEC Alsthom site in Larne will be welcomed by the skilled work force there awaiting employment opportunity. It will bring fresh hope to families who have suffered loss of earnings and income since GEC Alsthom closed its factory after having been the main employer locally for approximately 30 years.

I hope that IDB will respond quickly to F. G, Wilson's proposals for expansion in Larne and that the company can continue to achieve export success, with new products and increased sales even exceeding past achievements, which won the Queen's award for export in 1989 and 1991.

I hope that, when the Minister replies, he will tell the House whether, despite today's announcment of job losses, the recession in Northern Ireland has started to bottom out and whether he has any good reason to believe at this early stage in his new post that prospects for job creation will be brighter.

Has any recent consideration been given to rationalisation of the functions presently carried out by IDB and LEDU, and does the Minister foresee those bodies continuing to operate independently in future?

Northern Ireland has a major resource in lignite. If the Government would give the go-ahead for the exploitation and utilisation of that major resource, it would be one of the quickest ways of providing industry with cheaper electricity which, in itself, would be a major attraction to new investors.

In regard to the Department of the Environment's vote 1 for expenditure on roads, I thank the Minister for keeping me informed about safety measures and further investigations relating to the collapsed salt mines near Carrickfergus. However, a number of my constituents and others who have been inconvenienced by the closure of the B58 new line road request that priority be given to the realignment of the B58. Will the Minister tell us the likely start date for the scheme?

Let me also record my appreciation, and that of my constituents, for the support given by my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe), my right hon. Friend the Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor), the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and others to my efforts to have the A8 upgraded. I do not wish to miss any opportunity to make it clear to the House, and to a wider audience, that there has been disgraceful political

[Mr. Roy Beggs]

chicanery—direct political involvement—in matters affecting my constituency, no doubt in connection with the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Greater priority has been given to expenditure on road development between Newry and Dublin, where an average of only 6,000 vehicles travel daily, than to spending on the A8 Belfast-Larne road, which has an average daily traffic flow of 13,850 vehicles but which has not been mentioned in regard to upgrading.

We see that road as the natural Euro-route, and the natural corridor between Northern Ireland and Scotland. We will not be calmed by statements from Secretaries of State for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Transport that nothing is being done to reduce the importance of the Larne-Stranraer corridor. The very fact that millions of pounds are being poured into a route which cannot be justified but which may smooth Anglo-Irish relations could in itself threaten the success and continued employment of my constituents in the port of Larne.

I hope that the Minister will acknowledge the fact that the Belfast-Larne A8 road has more than double the traffic use of the Newry-Dublin route, and that he will demonstrate his support for our desire for the recognition of the Belfast-Larne-Stranraer corridor as a vital Euro-route. I hope that it will be upgraded at the earliest opportunity, and that the Minister will give an undertaking to make representations to the European Community for funding.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that the decision to give priority to other road schemes leading to Dublin via the border at Newry, and to take away the moneys previously allocated to the Larne road and other major road schemes in the Belfast suburbs, was a political decision by the present Northern Ireland Office Ministers? Regrettably, it is supported by the chairman of the Ulster bank, Mr. George Quigley—formerly a senior civil servant in the Northern Ireland Office—who is using his position in the bank to give political support to the reallocation of road funds. The Government are also being encouraged by the CBI.

Does my hon. Friend realise that those of us in Northern Ireland who have invested money in business and industry and have created jobs—95 per cent. of the real business men, not those in the CBI who have not invested one penny from their own pockets—want to give priority to the roadway to Larne rather than to the border road, which is used by only 5 per cent. of our trade in the Province?

Mr. Beggs: That was a helpful intervention, and I agree with every word of it. I am sure that the Minister must recognise that, in time, improvement to the Newry-Dublin road would be acceptable to Unionists. However, it cannot be justified now, especially not at the expense of other feeder routes into the Belfast-Larne road. Those of my constituents who bank with the Ulster bank will be interested in the fact that Mr. Quigley is not promoting what we perceive to be in the best interests of east Antrim and Northern Ireland. Perhaps they will communicate in a positive way what they think of Mr. Quigley's action to date.

The Government recently decided that acute services would be taken from my local hospital in Larne. I am still satisfied that the case for the retention of acute services there was sustainable and, had we not had a quango making decisions we might have been able to retain those services. It adds insult to injury when no extra money is to be used to improve the tortuous and dangerous Belfast-Larne road that the additional traffic will be forced to use it when patients decide to travel to the new Antrim hospital or to Belfast hospitals for their acute services. More patients and ambulances will be forced on to that road, as will the relatives who go to visit patients outside the Larne area.

The regeneration of the Glenarm village on the north Antrim coast will come about only when the Government provide the necessary funding to relocate the old Whiting mill and limestone works inland, away from the coast road to a more appropriate quarry site behind the village. I urge the Minister to find time to appreciate the excellent views on the Antrim coast road and to see for himself the blot on the landscape on the very edge of Glenarm village. I urge him to support strongly a bid for the necessary funding to give a kick start to the regeneration of that village. I am sure that, as soon as public money goes in, private money will follow. That will provide employment for a mixed community where there is presently high unemployment with little prospect of improvement because the village has been neglected for far too long.

I could raise many issues about the moneys voted to education, but I bring to the attention of the House the plight of 18 pupils who have been awarded grade 2 and who ask the Minister to ensure that sympathetic consideration is given to having them placed in the school of their first preference—Larne grammar school.

The former Northern Ireland Education Minister raised expectations that parental choice would be recognised. Parents and teachers were given every reason to expect that a grade 2 would ensure a place in a grammar school for those 18 youngsters, but they have been extremely disappointed. Despite their great success, in their post-primary careers, they will be denied places because the enrolment number at Larne grammar school is inadequate to meet the needs of this year's intake. It may not be possible for those well above average youngsters to find a grammar school place.

Larne grammar is a voluntary school with a good record and a cross-community intake. We do not have a state-controlled grammar school within 10 miles. If approval were given, it would be possible, with local co-operation, to accommodate all the pupils. A precedent has been set, because a few years ago a school was required to provide accommodation for an entire class group. I hope that, exceptionally, the Minister will urgently examine the need to increase the enrolment number at Larne grammar school this year. It would be the most sensible response from the Department of Education and would satisfy the reasonable expectations of parents and their children.

North Eastern education and library board has given top priority to replacing an exhausted aluminium structured primary school with new permanent accommodation. I ask the Minister to urge his Department to ensure that a start is made in this financial year in replacing Abbotscross primary school. The total sums in Department of Education votes 1, 2 and 3 will be inadequate to enable the demands made on schools by the Education Reform Act 1988 to be met. The Minister must bid for additional expenditure on schools to ensure that, at

primary and post-primary level, the necessary accommodation and equipment is in place to secure the delivery of the national curriculum.

I hope that the report on further education, which I have not seen but which I understand was released today, will permit an early decision to be made about capital expenditure on Newtownabbey college of further education. Only this week, the North Eastern education and library board considered requests from primary and post-primary schools for additional accommodation. In total, requests were made for 61 mobile and specialist classrooms. Of those 61 requests, about 10 per cent. were met. If that problem is multiplied across the other boards in Northern Ireland and account is taken of the needs of the Catholic maintained schools, there is clearly a tremendous shortfall. Ministers should take note and set out to meet those needs.

10.19 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Tonight we heard the maiden speech of the newly elected Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron), and I am glad that at last west Belfast has a representative who comes to the House, takes the oath of allegiance and speaks for the people of west Belfast. I have a personal interest because I represent west Belfast in another place, my wife represented part of it for eight years in the city council and my daughter continues to represent part of it. Therefore, I have something in common with the new Member. I am sure that he knows that he broke every rule of a maiden speech by being very controversial. As I did the same, I appreciate his attitude. I am sure that we shall look forward to his contributions and the opportunity to "have it out" on the Floor of the House as good democrats should.

I shall deal especially with Northern Ireland's health service but first, in case the Minister of State, the hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins), has an idea that I have something against the Minister responsible for agriculture, I wish to make it perfectly clear that I know that the Earl of Arran's title comes not from Scotland but from off the Donegal coast. At least his name has a relationship with Ulster.

I have nothing against the noble Lord, but it is still my conviction that, as agriculture is the largest industry in Northern Ireland, there should be a person in House to answer directly for it. That has always been the view of farmers, and I repeat it to the House tonight. However, I do not want the Minister to set me at odds with the noble Lord, because I shall have to do business with him for the farming community and I want to keep on the right side of him if I can—or also on the left side.

I am sure that the Minister knows that Northern Ireland has a problem with feedstuffs for poultry and with the results of the new heat treatment for the elimination of disease among poultry. He may also know that there is now a great health hazard as a result of the heat treatment and that the increase in the number of flies—like the flies of Egypt—around the places where the poultry is raised has become a menace. There has been a court case, and there are serious troubles among poultry raisers in Northern Ireland. I hope that the Minister will at least be able to hint at how the Department will handle the problem.

I shall not go further into that subject, because I must also mention the closure of small rural schools. There is a rural school on Torr head, the most beautiful part of the north Antrim coast. It is a maintained school belonging to the Roman Catholic Church. An attempt is being made to close it. I am fighting as hard as I can, along with every member of the parish including the parish priest, to keep it open. The tragedy is that those above the parish priest are taking sides against the parish to close the school. So you see, Madam Speaker, the situation I am in at the moment. I make an appeal for the man of Macedonia—the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates)—to come over and help us. I hope that he will keep that in mind when he is at his desk.

An old people's home in my constituency—Wilson house, in Broughshane—is under threat of closure. There are many other old people's homes in the Province, and the newly elected hon. Member for Belfast, West, the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) and I joined together in a great rally at the city hall. That, too, was presided over by a lady, Madam Speaker, and we made some progress. I trust that we shall make greater progress under your authority, and that the Minister will take heed of my plea on behalf of old people.

The nation's morality and ethical standing depend on how it treats its old people. If we do not treat the elderly well, we ourselves will not be well treated—some Ministers are becoming elderly themselves, and they should look to the days ahead. The Minister of State, the hon. Member for East Hampshire, points at me, but he too will be old one day; his hair will go grey and his teeth will fall out. He will need support and help in his old age. So I make a plea for the Government to be caring to the elderly in Northern Ireland.

The fight for the provision of comprehensive health care services for the people of Northern Ireland is a battle that all the elected representatives have to fight. We mean to win that battle. Government reports have been published, as have proposals from the repugnant quango systems which have been foisted on the people of Northern Ireland. They have now gone to town against our health care system, and Government health boards in Northern Ireland have developed a new civil service speak, which uses terms such as "streamlining", "rationalisation of services", "new frameworks" and "review of provision". All that talk really means cuts in services. The House must realise that we cannot afford such a catastrophe in Northern Ireland. The present proposals affect not just one parliamentary constituency but every parliamentary constituency.

Here is an issue on which all Northern Ireland Members in the House tonight agree. Please listen to us. The Government say that they will not listen to us when we disagree, so I hope that they will start to listen to us when we agree. Perhaps we should agree more often, which would help the Government.

The Province deserves the best: it deserves equal treatment and equal rights within the United Kingdom. We are not asking for a special case to be made for us. Over the past 30 years, Northern Ireland has made great advances in the provision of health care, and it would be a scandal for the Government now systematically to dismantle those advances and to turn back the hands of the clock by robbing Northern Ireland of its fundamental right to health care services based not on ability to pay but on need. I believe that health services should be based on need, not on the ability to pay.

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

Last week, Northern Ireland was stunned by the proposals that emerged from the Eastern health and social services board. They highlighted the Government's agenda to deplete the provision for the regions of Ulster and to centralise acute services, leaving rural areas exposed to incomplete services. The purpose of the Government's proposals is to save money. A complete and caring health service cannot be based only on a financial agenda.

I passed through one of the greatest tragedies that has occurred in the past few days. A busload of my Bannside Democratic Unionist branch members had a terrible crash in which five people were killed and more than 40 injured. The diligence, dedication and sacrifice of all the emergency services were brought home to me. There were policemen, Ulster Defence Regiment men, men from other regiments of the British Army, firemen, nurses, doctors and ambulance men.

The tragedy was that, if the crash had happened some time ago, Whiteabbey hospital or the Moyle hospital in Larne could have handled the emergency. The worst injured had to be taken to Belfast City hospital, to the Royal Victoria hospital and as far away as Ulster hospital. When I stood in Whiteabbey and saw some of the serious cases having to be carried into an ambulance again and taken away to other areas, I realised what was happening to our health service. The realisation came home to my heart as never before.

We need to keep acute services in the local areas. I am not with some of the consultants in this matter. They want to live in Belfast and to raise and educate their families there. They want to travel just a few miles to other hospitals and then to go back to Belfast at night. In the old days, a consultant lived in the area that he served. I remember that, when I was a boy, there were well respected and revered consultants in the town of Ballymena. They lived there, their families were educated there and they were part of the community. Many of the new consultants do not want to be part of the community. They want to do it all in Belfast and not have to go out to other places. The general practitioners must be commended for their dedication to their local areas. The GPs are all for the retention of acute services in those areas.

Last week, the Eastern health and social services board announced that it would close six hospitals. Some 750 beds in the area will close and up to 8,000 nursing staff will eventually lose their jobs. The Government propose to close Newtownards, Bangor, Belvoir Park, Down, Forster Green and Musgrave Park. What a list of hospitals to be closed! The six hospitals provide specialist care units for the whole community. Belvoir Park has a specialist cancer unit and an infectious diseases unit which will now be destroyed. That width of experience will come under the axe of health service cuts. There are warnings that two other hospitals that serve the greater Belfast area, Lagan Valley and the Belvoir, may be closed. The hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) told us what has happened to the Larne hospital. Altogether, eight hospitals in Northern Ireland will be closed. The proposal shows a wholesale disregard for people's needs.

The three hospitals that will now serve the Ards peninsula are the Royal Victoria, Belfast City and Ulster, yet the catchment area of Strangford—the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) is present this evening and knows about this as I do, because I represent the area in the European Parliament—is one of the fastest growing areas in Northern Ireland. In 1981, it had a population of 122,000. Today, it has a population of almost 131,000. Yet the board proposes to close the hospital there. What in the name of goodness has come into these quangos and boards that makes them propose to do such a terrible thing to the hospital provision in Northern Ireland?

Mr. John D. Taylor: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's comments, but should he be surprised at the decision taken by the Eastern health and social services board? We must remember that it is a quango appointed by a Conservative Minister and that it is simply carrying out the policies of Northern Ireland Office Ministers. Some 15 per cent. of the beds that were provided by the last Ulster Unionist Government have been abolished by the Northern Ireland Office.

Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, when constituencies such as North Down and Strangford have 70,000 electors each and the population of Belfast constituencies is falling day by day—each of them is down to almost 50,000 electors—it is an outrage that, simply to placate the Minister who appoints its members, a quango is closing down hospitals outside Belfast in areas which have the most rapidly growing population in Northern Ireland?

North Down and Strangford have some of the worst roads. If someone had an accident in upper Ards near Portaferry, it would take almost an hour to transfer that patient to Belfast City hospital or the Royal Victoria hospital. That is an outrage, and I hope that all hon. Members will join us in North Down and Strangford in opposing the quango's dictatorial decisions.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Of course I agree with the right hon. Gentleman. I agree that the health boards are out of touch with the people. The way in which members are appointed is ridiculous. Anyone who stands as an Alliance candidate and is defeated will be appointed to one of the quangos.

As far as I know, not one Democratic Unionist party member has been appointed to any health board in Northern Ireland. All those who are on a board were appointed because they were previously councillors. There is perhaps one Democratic Unionist member of the police authority, but there are none on the health boards. I believe that the Ulster Unionists have the same trouble. The leader of the Social Democratic and Labour party has told me that his party has the same trouble. The members of the boards are out of touch with the political parties and how people vote.

I have had a letter from a leading consultant in Ards, Mr. Ferris. He said:

> "There has been a great increase in the number of families of the security forces as Newtownards is a 'relatively safe area'. The Police Federation encourages their members to come to this area partly because of the safety and because there is less intimidation."

Yet the hospital services are being cut.

The figures for operations in Ards are excellent. The hospitals are not being closed because they do not do their job. They do their job. In some cases, the hospitals in Ards have better figures for operations than even the Royal Victoria, Belfast City or Ulster hospitals. The hospitals in

Ards do more operations than Down and the neighbouring gynaecological units combined, yet the hospitals in Ards come under the axe.

The waiting lists will not go away. They will increase. The leader of the Ulster Unionist party and I had a meeting with the previous Secretary of State. We put before him the facts about people awaiting heart operations in Northern Ireland. At the present waiting rate, they will die. Some of those people will never have a heart operation. For example, I know of a young business man from Ballymoney. The Minister with responsibility for health and social services, who is not here tonight, did everything to get that young man the necessary heart operation, but he almost died. The Minister showed me a card with the young man's name and a telephone number on it and he told me, "Every morning I ring and cry out for that young man to have an operation, Ian." If that is the way that we have to plead for our people to have heart operations, where will it all end?

I know that a new specialist unit has been set up, but even with that unit working overtime, it is not biting into the waiting list, because more people are joining it. Northern Ireland has the highest rate of heart disease in Europe. In recognition of that fact, the Government appointed a new heart specialist team to complement the work already being carried out in that important area, and the work being carried out at the Royal hospital. However, that team will only maintain the present waiting list and will not be able to reduce it. Two more specialist teams are required and money for them must be made available. It is a matter of life and death. The waiting lists are a scandal and corrective measures a necessity.

I know of people who have had to wait four years for heart surgery and I know how their health has deteriorated in that time. It is a matter of life and death. The most recent figures available in the "Register General Quarterly Returns for Northern Ireland" for 1990 show that the number of heart disease deaths in the Greater Belfast area was: Ards, 165; Belfast, 922; Castlereagh, 188; Down, 215; Lisburn, 218; and North Down, 200—making a total of 1,908. The figures for other heart-related disease deaths were: Ards, 22; Belfast 178; Castlereagh, 25; Down, 21; Lisburn, 28; and North Down, 22—making a total of 296. The grand total is 2,204. The figures show that there were 2,204 fatalities because of heart disease, 1,100 of them in Belfast. The other 1,104 people would have had to travel a great distance to receive acute services. Belfast requires another specialist team to cope with the problem.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) also faces difficulties, because the Tyrone hospital has to cope with heart disease, there.

The north Antrim people in Ballymena in my constituency feel strongly about the removal of their cardiac unit. We all helped with work, bequests and voluntary subscriptions to give the best cardiac unit to the Waveney hospital. What have they done with it? They have taken it away to Antrim, but Antrim did not pay for it, the Ballymena people did. The cardiac ambulance service ought to be maintained at Ballymena. If the cardiac unit is based in Antrim, people from Portglenone, at the periphery of north Antrim, will have to travel 50 miles for treatment. Those from Cushendall will face a round trip of 64 miles, while those from Cushendun will face a round trip of 74 miles. Those figures are scandalous, and the Government must wake up to the problem.

I am well aware of the new hospital programme for north Antrim. The hon. Members for Belfast, South and for Belfast, West and I campaigned together for that new hospital. Eventually, we won our fight and we were told that a brand new hospital would be built in the Coleraine-Ballymoney area. However, the trouble is that the Department is no longer keeping to that building plan. It is running down the old hospitals, but it is not running up the new one. It has now been decided to move the Ballymoney surgical unit, casualty service and the accident and emergency service—traditional to the town—by 30 June, which is not far away.

That unjust and undemocratic decision, which will incur enormous cost, has aroused much bad feeling, especially as that move will have a short-term effect only —seven years—because the new Causeway hospital is set to open in 1999. The whole idea is crazy. The new hospital campaign group, the north-eastern sub-division of the British Medical Association, the combined consultant medical staff committee of the Coleraine and Ballymoney hospitals, the Ballymoney borough council, the Ballymoney new hospital support group, the steering group—which represents the three local councils and the support groups of Ballymoney, Ballycastle and Coleraine —the Confederation of Health Service Employees and the National Union of Public Employees have all expressed opposition to the rationalisation proposals.

The opposition to such so-called rationalisation rests on three arguments. First, people are concerned that those proposals would provide this Government, or any future Government, with the pretext for delaying the building of the new Causeway hospital. Many circumstances will change between now and the stipulated date when the first patients will be admitted. Secondly, existing logistical problems at Coleraine hospital should be overcome—not least the difficulty in admitting surgical patients in the first place. Thirdly, the board and its officers have failed to hold meaningful discussions with those most affected by the board's far-reaching decisions.

I hope that the Minister responsible for hospitals and his colleagues will take my remarks to heart. The board refers continually to a stepping-stone approach, but those stones are too far apart, and we shall fall into a river of destruction.

What does the board think of the good surgeons of Route hospital? Its surgical unit not only has the best day-case figures for the northern area, but it admits more than 40 per cent. of all the surgical cases in Coleraine, Ballymoney and the Moyle district. In 1990-91, more than 40 per cent. of all major and intermediate surgical operations in the district were carried out in the Route hospital theatres, despite a reduced workload due to illnesses. It has now been decided to phase out the work of that hospital.

The hospitals of north Antrim are being penalised for being too efficient. One will be penalised if one works hard and does a good job. There is much at stake. The painful upheaval and expense that will result from the so-called rationalisation does not seem justified, especially as short-term benefits will result, and it should not be permitted.

Whatever else may be said about the decision, the manner in which it has been taken is an indictment of those who hold power without accountability and it will be long remembered by the people. There must be accountability.

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

In that context, let us remember that we do not even have a Select Committee here to examine Northern Ireland issues. Not one Northern Ireland Member is on the Public Accounts Committee to ask important questions that need to be asked. Why is the Northern Ireland Office not scrutinised? I believe it is because the civil servants are making the running and do not want to have to answer.

I used to be chairman of a public accounts committee in another place. Ministers and civil servants would sweat when they came to be questioned on their stewardship. I urge the Government to give an account of their stewardship. They should be proposing the establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee so that they can be cross-examined. It is vital that we have such a body, and a Public Accounts Committee.

When this matter was raised at a certain confidential meeting, we found that the people most against a Select Committee were the civil servants. I hope that it will not be long before a Northern Ireland Select Committee is formed, and it will give me great delight to be a member of it. I will then have the opportunity to cross-examine some of the civil servants. We will see how civil they are when they are put in the vice.

A whole district in Ballymoney is insisting that, instead of indulging in incredible interim expenditure, the Department of Health and the Northern health and social services board should act within the terms of the recommendations of the House. We must take into account the record of prevarication on the part of the Northern board since 1977 and demand that the new Causeway hospital is completed by 1997.

I wish to pay tribute to Mr. Robb, even though he and I are politically as far apart as heaven and hell, and that is a long way.

Mr. Stott: Which are you in?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I leave that to the hon. Gentleman's imagination. Knowing the twisted way in which he thinks, he will expect me to be going down—*[Interruption.]*—but he is wrong. Nor will I be in purgatory.

Mr. Robb has done a superb job, as everyone, irrespective of religion, agrees. He happens to be a Protestant; he is a Protestant republican. He owes his conversion to republicanism to the newly elected hon. Member for Belfast, West. I once heard him giving his testimony as a convert at a meeting. Everybody in the community owes Mr. Robb the highest praise for the way in which he has worked for the people and put his life, in sickness, at risk to help the people of the area. I pay that tribute to him with all my heart, soul and mind.

I plead with the Government to look again at provision for the elderly. I shall not dwell on the point because I know that the hon. Member for Belfast, South wishes to speak, and I want him to take part in the debate. I think of homes such as Wilson house, Throne hospital, Mourne hospital in Newcastle, Wilmot house and the Molone View day centre, all of which are facing closure.

The plans to close them are based purely on finance rather than on humanity. The people in those places have a fundamental right to community care. I sat at one home beside an old ex-service man—there were rows of elderly people—and he told me, "This is my home. Where will I go from here when the doors close?" I urge the Government to heed the appeal of the elderly. Do not ruin the last days of their rest and peace. If such places must be run down, do it with charity and love and not at the behest of a quango.

It is sad to see how the health boards in the Omagh area want to set Members of Parliament against one another. Members of Parliament must fight for hospitals in their areas. They would be worth nothing if they did not. Why is Enniskillen hospital in confrontation with Omagh hospital, dividing and polarising the community? They are fighting for the right of women to have their maternity needs met in their area. What they are trying to do is inhuman.

There is a rape in our health services, based on a promise of cost efficiency; but cost-effective measures and book-balancing are being carried out while ignoring the harsh realities of human life. Closures and cuts to save money are not the answer to our social and economic ills. Let me issue a word of warning: the economy of health should be the economy of well-being. The converse is the economy of disease.

Rationalisation has been argued for on the ground of economy. Wholesale disregard for the people is not the way forward. Incorporating them in plans for the health service and putting them first are the only ways to provide comprehensive health care for all. I want the Minister to listen and act. A cry crosses the religious, political, class and age divides: "Stop what you are doing. Please give heed to the voice of the people and save our hospitals and elderly care centres."

10.47 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I shall take up a point that the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) made—a plea for a Select Committee on Northern Ireland—but turn it round in another direction. A Select Committee of this House issued a report on maternity provision and included Northern Ireland in it.

We asked the Department to withdraw an out-dated circular that was reissued recently. We also suggested that, before it continues to run down maternity services in rural areas, it should examine what is happening in, for example, Brecon and Radnor and the Bath authority. We received a report of a meeting of the Western health board, and the general manager dismissed the report as of no importance. I believe that he was showing disrespect to the House, because the Government must respond to that report in the House before a mere general manager can discard it as having no authority.

I join others in welcoming the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) and congratulating him on his maiden speech. I do so for various reasons. First, it will take some work off me. I remember, shortly after being elected to this House, sitting in the advice centre where Robert Bradford was murdered. A person came in with his disabled boy and said, "Mr. Smyth, I am neither one of your constituents nor one of your flock, but I would not go to the one who is there now, and I am not too sure that I would have gone to the one who let him in." He came to me to argue the case of a lad born with deformity, for whom officialdom was trying to discard responsibility. I am glad that the hon. Member for Belfast, West will take up such issues in future.

Secondly, I welcome the hon. Gentleman because, interestingly, the hon. Member called to speak after his

maiden speech, the hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) once represented Belfast, West. When he was being selected as the Unionist candidate, my father nominated him. As a boy who was born in west Belfast, I now represent a part of south Belfast that was originally west Belfast, and I welcome the hon. Gentleman to the House.

I join the hon. Member for Antrim, North in saying that the next time that the hon. Member for Belfast, West speaks, there might be more of a reaction in the House. The hon. Member for Belfast, West said that there were no job opportunities in west Belfast. There may not be enough, but it is a calumny to suggest that jobs have not been provided in the past 10 years. Strathearn Audio and those industries and services that are now in south Belfast, were actually provided by the former Unionist Administration of Northern Ireland to create jobs in west Belfast. It is important to maintain a sense of balance when making charges.

I thank the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for his earlier response, but I am looking forward to receiving the Secretary of State's letter. I was at the launch of the next stage of the 'Making Belfast Work' campaign. Admittedly, I was unable to stay to hear the Secretary of State's speech, but I received the brochure. South Belfast was not mentioned in relation to the £26,000 that was allocated.

The fact that south Belfast people take the initiative and do things for themselves has been used to move them to other districts. St. George's community work began in Sandy Row, moved to south Belfast and has now been redirected to east Belfast. The federation youth training was started by professionals. An accountant finally resigned from the chair because of the way that the organisation was being treated. Men were volunteering their time to try to equip young people in that district who are now moving away to east Belfast. Those involved with Ormeau youth enterprises cross the spectrum of society and have been pushed around for more than four years. They are placed in any areas of need.

I do not doubt that some money has been invested in south Belfast, but when reference is made to the youth team working in the district it should be remembered that one section is on loan from west Belfast and another section has no relevance to south Belfast. The Taughmonagh district is heavily deprived and is still depressed. Donegall avenue is a lovely old street, in which virtually every house is derelict.

Work is being carried out to improve the Ormeau road, lower Ravenhill and other districts. It is time that officials stopped judging south Belfast by Queen's university, Stranmillis training college and the Upper Malone. There are regions of tremendous need right on the margins.

I understand what the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) meant when he suggested that the IDB officials should not be entirely blamed for lack of development. However, when vote 1 of the Department of Economic Development mentions the cost of the IDB executive, I question whether we are receiving value for money. The hon. Member for Antrim, East and I went to the far east in 1983 and blazed a trail for IDB.

It helped us tremendously: it gave us 100 large brochures to carry. We opened doors. Journalists came to Belfast. When the IDB opened an office in one of these countries, it did not even have the courtesy to advise the journalists of that, even though they had come to Belfast to discover what was happening in Northern Ireland for themselves. It was only when one of them returned to Northern Ireland that he found out.

So I am talking about a degree of insensitivity. The organisation seems to want to direct matters itself instead of using the networks which exist to be developed for the good of the community.

I recognise the case for co-operation with the Industrial Development Authority in road shows. It is tragic that it appears that the IDA is attracting more inward investment to the Republic. We are competing with the other regions of the United Kingdom for inward investment, and competing with our hands tied behind our backs. Anyone who wants to invest in the Republic can do so. Anyone who wants to invest in the United Kingdom can do so. The problem lies in the question mark over Northern Ireland: will Northern Ireland still be in the United Kingdom in five or 10 years' time, given all the shilly-shallying that has been going on? Our political instability is one of the reasons why we are not attracting the inward investment that we might if we went at it properly.

Why is the Department still pussy-footing over residents' parking? That has been on the cards for years. People in London and elsewhere have the right to park their cars in the streets where they live. The Lisburn, Malone and Stranmillis roads in my constituency are densely populated. There is nowhere to park. The university population abandon their cars in these streets. It was interesting that the Department of the Environment moved quickly enough when it put in parking meters—that was cost-effective. Neither we nor the residents argued that they should not pay for their permits——

Mr. Trimble: I am familiar with the problem in my hon. Friend's constituency—especially in the university and Stranmillis area. I assure him that similar—although perhaps not as great—problems exist in numerous other places, including the town of Portadown in my constituency. There is a great need for the sort of residents' parking scheme to which he refers.

Rev. Martin Smyth: My hon. Friend underlines my point.

Under vote 4, I want to deal with planning. I discovered many years ago that television companies in the United States showed devasted areas of Belfast as the work of the IRA. Apart from the fact that some of them are the legacy of Adolf Hitler, the rest of them were the gift of developers who ravaged the city, scattering its population to its four corners. They should have got on with building. I discovered lately that one of the greatest culprits was the road services branch of the Department of the Environment.

Developers in the neighbouring constituency of Strangford have been waiting for more than two years for a decision. When the Minister replies, will he tell us whether the Department has reached a decision? I was told that it would do so within the first two weeks of June. That period has now passed. I understand that the Commission made a decision in September 1991 and it is now June 1992. What is the reason for the continual delay?

A developer in the University road area took years to obtain planning permission. Ultimately, he had to go to a tribunal. When I approached the then Minister about the case, he told me that he could not interfere because an appeal was pending. When I asked the civil servant

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

involved about the delay, which was resulting in soaring expenses, he told me that it would have been better if the building had been rehabilitated. The developer was being asked not only to maintain the building's facade, which he had promised to do, but to restore a wrecked interior, putting in cornices which had not existed for years. It transpired that that civil servant had not even examined the place when he was asked to do so. It is the cry of many that our officials should have a bit more sense of responsibility, especially when people are investing money in the well-being of the community.

I understand that the Under-Secretary is aware that, under the new education guidelines, a place has been allocated to physical education and swimming. The Department has decided that the Finaghy primary school is over-endowed with land, so there must be a disposal of property. The board sought planning permission for housing but it was unsuccessful. It said that it did so simply to test the land's value, but I am convinced that, if planning permission for housing had been obtained, the land would have been sold. It now says that the Department is pressing it to dispose of the property because it is surplus to requirements.

That land is an open space with a pitch and a swimming pool which fell into disuse in 1987. Belfast council's leisure unit is prepared to take the property over and develop it, but instead of passing it over to the Department of the Environment, under which Belfast council would work at a reasonable or nominal price to provide facilities to serve 10 schools and the community at large, the Department is pressing it to put the property on the open market so that it can be bought by some speculator who hopes to carry out the work.

With regard to vote 1 for the Department of Health and Social Services, I reiterate the concern over the closure of the home. I also question the planning in the Eastern health and social services board. I have referred to the Western board. I have had occasion to raise with the chairman of the Eastern board certain events in the Green Park unit. Having received the usual flannel that officials prepare for a chairman to sign, I discovered that, instead of dealing with the problem, a witch hunt is on to discover who is giving me the information. I believe that it is the board's job to ensure that things are done properly.

Let me give an example. In January 1991, after three public advertisements had been placed, a director of nursing services was appointed to start work on 1 April. The terms of employment stated that over five years she would receive a 20 per cent. salary increase if her performance was satisfactory. Four days after starting work, she was told by the unit manager, "We have changed our plans here. A single director of nursing services will cover Belvoir and Musgrave park."

The director of nursing services was shattered. Where was the forward planning? Three months after her appointment, the management did not know that only one director would be needed, and they appointed someone from London. How can management expect loyalty, devotion and service from the work force if they treat people like that? The person concerned was well qualified. I have known her since I walked the corridors in Musgrave park 40 years ago as an assistant chaplain, when she was a trainee nurse. I believe that the time has come for greater responsibility and accountability.

I asked a parliamentary question about the number of firms that had been taken off tender lists and subsequently restored. The Minister replied:

"One firm was temporarily removed from the health and personal social services select list of tenderers for the market testing of support services. This firm was reinstated within the past two months and my noble friend does not think it would be proper to disclose details of the firm concerned."—*[Official Report, 21 May 1992; Vol. 208, c. 243.]*

Why was that firm restored, other than to fulfil a contract that it had been given? It was guilty of a ploy to get rid of workers in the health service and in the cleansing department of the hospital concerned. It had been engaged to do that work, and was employing 80 per cent. of the work force in one place who were already in receipt of social security payments. Comments have been made about low sentences in the civil courts. There seems to be no detriment to firms that have been off the list for two months and are then restored.

Finally, let me ask the Minister to tell us why the money was transferred from the Larne line and the other priority road schemes to the Dublin route. A single protest is our only way of calling attention to the importance of accountability.

11.8 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Robert Atkins): The tone of much of the debate has been typical of the warmth and friendship that I have encountered in the short time that I have held my present post. I am sure that my colleagues would agree with me about the response that we have received from a wide variety of people in Northern Ireland.

It would be wrong for me to begin my speech without paying public tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), whose achievements were considerable when he held the responsibilities that I now hold. I see my opposite number, the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott), nodding in agreement. I think that hon. Members on both sides of the House will know of the commitment and interest shown by my hon. Friend. Following his translation to the Board of Trade, that commitment and interest will still be extremely helpful to Northern Ireland in relation to such matters as inward investment.

This has been an excellent debate. I think that I can speak for all hon. Members in saying that it has been an enormous pleasure to be able, for the first time since 1983, I believe, to refer across the Floor of the House to the hon. Member who represents west Belfast—the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron). We have not had the opportunity to do that for a long time. Whatever one's political views may be, the defeat of Adams in the general election was a major and significant achievement for parliamentary democracy.

That defeat produced the new Member who is respected and highly regarded throughout the city for his role as a local general practitioner, which is an added bonus. Whatever might be our views and differences, his maiden speech made clear his knowledge of his constituency and the fact that he has roots in his community. He spoke with force and feeling and made it plain that he will be an excellent representative—a full-blown parliamentary

representative—of west Belfast. We know that west Belfast, like the rest of the Province, needs a parliamentary democrat to represent its views.

The hon. Member for Belfast, West said that he wanted the Government to help. I can give him the unequivocal assurance that the Government will help him in west Belfast as they will the other 17 Northern Ireland Members of this place. We shall, of course, have our differences and arguments, and in that I include the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson). That is only right and proper in a democracy. I hope that hon. Members who represent Northern Ireland constituencies will recognise that the team of Ministers in the Northern Ireland Office will do its best to deal with the concerns and problems of Northern Ireland with as much dedication as have previous teams. There may be differences, but we shall do our best.

My responsibilities for the Departments of Economic Development and for the Environment give me a unique opportunity to help conserve and enhance the natural environment within Northern Ireland and to use that environment as an important foundation in seeking to strengthen the economy through the various policies that are now being implemented. These ministerial roles complement one another perfectly and are, in my experience, indivisible.

I am convinced of the many inherent advantages which Northern Ireland has and which we must use to the full. It is seen from outside as a largely rural and lightly industrialised area, not spoiled by the more traditional heavy manufacturing activities. There is an excellent road network and an excellent supply of good, clean water. Some of my hon. Friends who represent constituencies in the south-east of England would be inordinately jealous of Northern Ireland's water supply. Northern Ireland has a landscape of great variety and great natural beauty, some of which I have had the opportunity to see. It is largely unspoiled. In today's world, these are substantial assets. Everyone who is involved in promoting Northern Ireland must maximise the opportunities that such a clean and green environment provides.

There will, of course, be occasions when the protectors of the environment and the demands of industry might appear to be in conflict. Where these circumstances arise, there needs to be a careful balance drawn between the interests. We are determined to protect the exceptional environment, but that protection must not in itself be unduly restrictive, nor erect unnecessary hurdles that will inhibit economic expansion. On the other hand, the business and industrial community must recognise that it has duties and responsibilities towards the entire community, and so must take appropriate action, for example, to control production processes, waste emissions and cleanliness and tidiness in its sites. I shall deal with particular sites in due course.

The greater awareness of the environment gives us a real opportunity in our wider economic development policies. As we already have an image as an area with a clean and fresh environment, we can strengthen the image by making it a common theme in all our promotional work, both at Government and industry levels. It will mean Northern Ireland industry in general focusing on making its products more environmentally friendly.

I am convinced that firms that are more sensitive to consumer preferences in this area will gain a market advantage. Industry should also think seriously about how to make its processes more environmentally friendly. This will become increasingly important in firms' relationships both with their local communities and with their customers, and it can also have cost advantages.

A green approach would mean seeking to establish Northern Ireland in the eyes of the world as a centre of excellence in industrial and environmental matters. If we concentrate on raising our standards, finding solutions and adopting best practice throughout industry, we shall develop knowledge and expertise which we can market to others and which can draw to Northern Ireland industries that need high standards and expertise on their doorstep. That is not an easy or short-term approach and it will require effort not only from industry in Northern Ireland but from everyone whose actions impact on the environment. That approach can offer Northern Ireland a competitive edge in the world of the 1990s and beyond, and I am determined to take it forward.

A number of issues arose in the debate, as I would have expected. Given the strictures that have been uttered about my predecessor waffling on minor points and not dealing with the substance of debates, I shall endeavour to cover as much ground as I can, given the constraints of time. Otherwise, I shall write to hon. Members about the matters that are causing them concern and endeavour to pursue them in greater detail.

The hon. Member for Wigan, who, as an old colleague across the greensward, I am delighted to have shadowing me—as least for a short time—raised a number of matters that I hope to deal with as generalities. However, he particularly asked about structural funds from the EC. Northern Ireland's allocation from the structural funds was disappointing, but Bruce Millan has confirmed that it was our prosperity relative to other objective 1 regions that accounted for the size of the Northern Ireland share.

Our GDP per head is higher than the normal limit for objective 1 status, but we have been assured by Mr. Millan that Northern Ireland's allocation was no reflection on the quality or presentation of our regional development plan. It is satisfying to note that the areas selected for Community support accorded well with the Government's development priorities. The hon. Gentleman's point is well taken and I undertake to continue to ensure that Northern Ireland receives a fair share of funds from the EC.

It was a great pleasure for every hon. Member to hear my hon. Friend the Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder), particularly as he has now joined the mythical round table. Hon. Members will be pleased to congratulate him on that well-deserved honour. He has been a Member for many years and his work on behalf of his constituents is well known. He talked about a number of issues. One issue that amused the House, although I know that it was serious, was the problem about Geddis farm in Helen's Bay. He spoke so fluently about it—almost mellifluously—that that not only the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) but others will make a beeline to see exactly what is causing such an eyesore.

The Department of the Environment is fully aware of local concern on the issue and has been involved in enforcement action for 10 years. Some successful prosecutions have been brought and compliance with enforcement notices secured. The Department is carrying out a review of the situation and is examining a number of options to solve the problem.

That does not tell the hon. Gentleman anything that he did not know already. I assure him that I shall have a look

[The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office]

at the site for myself and perhaps have a conversation with him to see whether we can do more to ensure that what he describes as a dump does not stay that way for very much longer.

The hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) spoke about a number of matters, largely to do with roads and transportation but not exclusively so. As a former Minister for Roads and Traffic, I felt a sense of déjà vu about some of his comments. Hon. Members always want more roads but attack the Government for building more roads and putting concrete all over the place. The problem is almost insoluble. I assure the hon. Gentleman that when I was Minister for Roads and Traffic I tried to switch the balance towards maintenance, particularly maintenance and improvements that save lives and reduce accidents.

I am currently considering road maintenance and I am conscious of the concerns expressed, although I must tell the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friends that to travel on some of the roads in Northern Ireland as I have done recently, with the sun shining, is an eye-opener. I wished only that I had an open car and a pretty girl by my side —*[Interruption.]*—my wife, I hasten to add. The roads were delightful and empty. There was no traffic, except perhaps on the odd occasion when I came across a vehicle checkpoint. Generally, the roads were very good and they complement the countryside in many respects. I think that hon. Members of all parties in Northern Ireland would agree with that.

Nevertheless, the serious point about maintenance is well taken. Although I cannot undertake to wave a magic wand immediately, I am considering the problem and I hope that we can switch the balance a little so that we make a more significant impact on road maintenance than has been the case in the past.

The general point made about new roads came as no surprise. Every hon. Member who spoke mentioned roads in one form or another—how this or that road is needed. In the presence of my hon. Friend the Minister of State who is responsible for money in Northern Ireland, I should perhaps say that we shall make a firm claim for as much money as possible for new roads, but he will be sure to have a view—undoubtedly backed by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer or at least by the Chief Secretary—about how much funding can be allocated. Nevertheless, my hon. Friend will have heard what has been said. If he has not, I shall ensure that he hears.

Let me mention one important road in particular, the Newry bypass. It has been a continuing objective to improve and develop the main road links to the Belfast and Larne ports in the interests of Northern Ireland's economy. One of the first meetings that I attended after becoming a Minister was with a number of senior distinguished business men, all of whom said that the Newry bypass was one of the most important things that they wanted. It has been achieved progressively as funds and the demands of competing priorities permit. The improvement of the road system in the Newry area is a long-standing objective.

The A8 Belfast to Larne road is a good quality road, capable of carrying current and foreseeable traffic volumes. However, the upgrading of the single carriageway central section of the route is being considered as a mid-term objective. As I said, the general point about roads is well taken, and I shall endeavour to reflect hon. Members' concerns when the issues come up for discussion.

In a distinguished contribution that lasted for a considerable time and covered almost every part of his constituency, the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) mentioned several matters, including agriculture. I can assure him that my noble Friend whose responsibility it is and who—as I said in a brief intervention—is ably represented by the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), who will speak learnedly on such matters having had relevant experience when he held a former portfolio, is only too well aware of the worries about angel dust and is doing what he can to effect stringent controls. We all agree that it is a serious matter which must be dealt with.

Incidentally, my noble Friend is duty Minister in Northern Ireland at the moment. Had he not been so, he would undoubtedly have been listening to the debate. I hope that hon. Members will accept that he will get a full report on that and other matters that fall to him, not least those relating to health.

The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster mentioned the specific problem of the maternity unit at the Tyrone County hospital. As he said, it is undoubtedly a major issue for local people, and I assure them and their representatives that my noble Friend will examine the arguments very carefully. He has recently visited both hospitals and heard at first hand the views of the local communities. He has told them that he hopes to announce his decision by the end of June. I shall draw to his attention the general health issues that have been raised, and he will appreciate hon. Members' concerns.

I know that local communities are concerned when a health and social service board proposes the closure or change of use of facilities and services. But I hope that everyone will agree that if boards are to continue to provide the highest quality services, changes are inevitable. I know that boards take seriously their responsibility to consult their local communities when changes are contemplated—and when change is major and controversial, it must, of course, come to the responsible Minister for endorsement or otherwise. I assure the House unequivocally that my noble Friend takes that responsibility very seriously.

Decisions to close or change the use of facilities will never be taken lightly, and the views of local communities —and especially those of hon. Members speaking forcefully—will, of course, always be given the most careful consideration.

Rev. Martin Smyth: For the guidance of hon. Members from Northern Ireland and of the people concerned, will the Minister tell us how he defines consultation?

Mr. Atkins: The fact that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues have raised the matter means that I shall report seriously to my noble Friend about their concerns—I am sure that he will recognise them. Doubtless he will make his decisions and his anxieties known to hon. Members in due course. I understand the point that the hon. Gentleman was making.

Matters involving the Industrial Development Board have been raised. I am conscious of the fact that the board

has had a difficult year. We all know that we have been through a recession, and I assure the House that the IDB and the Local Enterprise Development Unit, whether under the present chairman or the new chairman, are only too well aware of hon. Member's concerns and of those of other people in Northern Ireland, and are taking them to heart.

The hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) asked about residential parking. I am told that no legal power exists in Northern Ireland to permit the introduction of residents' parking schemes, but we are in the process of considering how one could be introduced. It would require an enabling power in primary legislation. Again, the point is well taken. I was astonished that there was no such power, and we are considering the idea closely.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State assures me that he would be more than happy to meet the hon. Member for Belfast, South about Finaghy primary school. No doubt that can be arranged—behind the Chair or elsewhere.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) spoke with knowledge and, understandably, with some emotion about the dreadful crash a week or so ago involving members of his community and his church—I believe that they were supporters and constituents. It was a dreadful tragedy, and my fellow Minister of State, who was the duty Minister at the time, went to the hospital and publicly congratulated all those involved—as I did myself. We offer our sympathy for the dreadful accident, and ask the hon. Gentleman to convey that sympathy to his friends, supporters and constituents. An investigation is being carried out into what happened, and what we can learn from it. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take that in the spirit in which it is rendered.

In conclusion, I emphasise again the challenges which now exist with regard both to the environment and to economic development policies, and to their inter-relationship. The priorities for all concerned about the environment will be to conserve and enhance the natural environment; to develop greater interest in and awareness of our historic heritage; and to protect public health. The latter includes the condition of inland and tidal waters —concerning which, incidentally, Northern Ireland's record is extremely good, with all 16 beaches meeting EC standards.

Mr. Trimble *rose——*

Mr. Atkins: I hope the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for not giving way, but time is running out.

Among our other priorities will be the improvement of air quality, especially emissions from domestic and industrial sources.

With that green approach to economic development, our priorities for industry will be to promote the Northern Ireland green image in a sustained and systematic way—which is especially important for the food and tourism industries—to develop greener products, which will meet or anticipate consumer preferences; to develop cleaner processes and use that as a marketing point; to adapt processes to use fewer materials and to create less waste; and to use energy much more efficiently in all production activities.

I assure the House, and everyone in Northern Ireland, as represented by their Members of Parliament, that the new team in Stormont—especially as it includes my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, who has been there for a while—is committed to use all the parliamentary resources at our disposal to use the unique opportunity which is still open to everyone in Northern Ireland to take advantage of the environmental position and current economic development to ensure that Northern Ireland has a real future—not only as a peripheral part of Europe but as a central part of the United Kingdom. That commitment is there for all to see.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 87, Noes 9.

Division No. 37] **[11.29 pm**

AYES

Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Bates, Michael
Beresford, Sir Paul
Booth, Hartley
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Carrington, Matthew
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Congdon, David
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Fabricant, Michael
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Gallie, Phil
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Horam, John
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mates, Michael
Merchant, Piers
Neubert, Sir Michael
Richards, Rod
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stephen, Michael
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Watts, John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

NOES

Beggs, Roy
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
McCrea, Rev William
Maginnis, Ken
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. William Ross and
Mr. David Trimble.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 2nd June, be approved.

Trust Hospitals (London)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

11.40 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): This debate centres on the funding of national health service hospitals, especially those under trust status in London and those shortly to gain such status. My hon. Friends the Members for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) and for Dulwich (Ms. Jowell) will hope to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that we may have a wide-ranging debate on health matters in London.

In my constituency, St. George's hospital, Tooting, is seeking trust status. There is deep concern among local people about what that will mean for the health of their community.

The evidence shows that many trust hospitals have funding problems, which affect services, staffing and morale. We are aware that changes are made primarily to balance the accounts. To realise that, one need go no further than the comment made to the Select Committee on Health in January by Duncan Nichol, the chief executive of the NHS, who said that the "key duty" of trusts is to break even. That is what causes deep concern in London.

An inquiry on London health care, headed by Sir Bernard Tomlinson, is taking place. He has already been left in no doubt by various organisations in London about the problems that the national health service faces: problems of funding, waiting lists, low staff morale, the need for an improvement in primary health care, and for closer collaboration between hospitals and local authorities, which leaves much to be desired in many parts of London. Those are only some of our many concerns.

Obviously, better management can help but the overriding issue is, and will be, the question of how services are to be improved and that will depend overwhelmingly on funding. We have heard on many occasions that even when trusts sell their services on the open market—which will not be easy—there must be some financial input from the Government. We want the Minister to tell us what that will be. We are aware that earlier this year, in the run-up to the general election, a lot of financial funding seemed to be available—waiting lists were reduced and salaries were increased—but we now realise that things have changed considerably.

Money is more difficult to obtain via Government funding and many hon. Members must have read the report in the *Observer* business section last week entitled

"Cabinet row over impact of public spending cuts."

It went on to say:

"A major Cabinet row is developing over Treasury insistence on dramatic cuts in public spending".

Based on what we already know, that report could be true.

I saw on the news tonight that the Luton and Dunstable hospital trust, which was established last year, has announced that it is cutting 95 jobs. That is on top of the 16 job losses that it announced last week. So, in a matter of a week, 100 jobs have been lost. Such decisions are causing great concern.

We might be told that such job losses will not hurt hospital services, but we know that that is untrue. I have collected more than a dozen press cuttings that highlight existing problems—for example:

"NHS trust 'mishandled' injured baby case."

Two others, which relate to the Guys and Lewisham trust, state:

"Heart patients wait as budget runs out one month early."

and

"Four heart patients 'died for lack of money'".

We have sought the debate to express our deep concerns to the Minister and to the Government in particular.

I do not expect the Minister to reply to the specific issue that I intend to raise, but I have a duty to alert him to the concerns of my constituents and myself about the appointment of the chairperson to the St. George's hospital trust. Two people, who are well known to the public are in running for that post. However, the front runner is a Member of the Upper House, who is well known in Parliament and outside. I do not intend to mention his name, but many of us are absolutely opposed to his appointment.

That gentleman already holds a number of financial directorships, and one wonders how he can find time to do justice to them all. The local people would view his appointment as chairperson of the trust with contempt. Given his current financial responsibilities, they would consider that he had been appointed to balance the books only, rather than to improve local NHS services as a result of trust status. We are opposed to his appointment.

I accept that the Minister may be unable to address that specific issue, but if that gentleman is appointed, I shall make all relevant correspondence, which I have kept confidential, public. I shall leave the matter at that, because I want my hon. Friends to have an opportunity to take part in the debate.

11.50 pm

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) for giving me time in his debate. All London Members are extremely concerned about the future of the capital's hospitals. Devasting cuts have recently been disclosed at University College hospital and Bart's, and the threat of closure continues to hang over the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital, which is extremely famous, is used by many women and is held in high regard. Much public anxiety exists over the future of that hospital, which offers a unique health care service.

All who care about London and Londoners must be anxious about the state of health provision in the capital, as my hon. Friend ably pointed out. The Government have pressed on relentlessly, encouraging hospitals to opt out, regardless of local feeling and opposition. When ballots of staff have been conducted, and public opinion canvassed, the overwhelming view has generally been to reject opt-out, as in the case of the North Middlesex hospital. But the Government have gone ahead regardless of the views of those who work in the service and the people who use it.

Of the two principal hospitals that served my constituency, one is planning to become a trust hospital and the other became a trust a year ago. The Whittington hospital is planning to opt out and has produced glossy brochures and smart newspaper advertisements telling the people that there will be greater accountability, faster response times, a more efficient service and higher calibre staff. But local residents, staff and patients have all told me that that is unlikely to happen and that they do not want a trust hospital. There is also a large question mark over its financial viability.

But even if we were generous enough to give the Whittington the benefit of the doubt and question what local people have told us, we must consider what has happened at the neighbouring hospital that serves my constituency, the North Middlesex, which has opted out. The picture there is extremely grim. It became a trust just over a year ago. Is it locally accountable? While meetings of public bodies are usually open to the public, meetings of the trust board are held in private, so local people and representatives of the community health council and the press cannot attend.

Last week the hospital announced cuts of £1·7 million, and I gather that from last April the general manager of the trust was having almost daily meetings with the Department of Health in an effort to deal with problems that were arising. To enable the latest cuts to be met, the hospital has announced that, instead of two meals a day, patients recovering—and therefore needing nourishing meals—will get one meal and a snack. After 6.30 there will be no evening drinks. Is that how we should run our more caring and more efficient health service? It may be an efficient way to save money, but it is hardly the way to help patients recuperate. It is another example of trusts putting financial savings before patient care.

It has been announced that about 50 jobs will go. My excellent local campaigning newspaper, *The Hornsey Journal*, confirms that redundancies will occur among auxiliary nurses and nurses in medical wards and casualty departments. I recently questioned the Secretary of State for Health about casualty facilities in my constituency and she asserted that excellent services were being provided. It is also reported that a surgical ward with 26 beds and half of another ward will be closed at the North Middlesex hospital. That is not the way to attract higher calibre staff, but it undermines the confidence and skill of those professionals whom we admire so much.

My constituents are understandably anxious about health care in the community. In April this year, the North-East Thames region had the worst record in England for waiting lists of more than two years. The promises that we were given about trust hospitals have been broken and there are financial crises at both Whittington and North Middlesex hospitals.

I urge the Government to act urgently to ensure that patients' lives are not put at risk for the sake of unrelenting commercialism.

11.56 pm

Ms. Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): I, too, welcome this debate and thank my hon. Friend for Tooting (Mr. Cox) for allowing me to share his time.

We desperately need urgent action to deal with the looming crisis facing London hospitals. The optimistic propaganda from Ministers about the future of London hospitals simply does not square with the experience of constituents who visit my weekly surgery and the many who write to me.

The problem is London's dual role in meeting Londoners' health needs and also securing as a regional and national resource in providing specialist treatment for people from many parts of the country. The issue is how those two roles can be properly reconciled.

I wish to describe how those two responsibilities impact on the local hospitals used by my constituents—King's College and Dulwich hospitals. My hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Mrs. Harman), who for many years —since before I arrived in the House—has sought to find solutions to the problem, will share my concerns.

King's College hospital is classed as one of London's major teaching hospitals. It is unusual compared with other London teaching hospitals because seven out of every 10 people treated at the hospital live in the Camberwell health authority area, which my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham and I represent. Three out of every 10 people travel from other parts of the country or from Europe to benefit from the highly specialised forms of treatment that are provided. It is a world centre for liver transplants and for specialities like the treatment of diabetic gangrene of the foot. King's College hospital is also unusual in that, because it is old and desperately in need of refurbishment, its unit costs are lower than those of other teaching hospitals.

I remind hon. Members that the area served by the hospital is described by health care statisticians as one of high morbidity. That means that, for instance, three times as many babies die before they are a year old in Camberwell as in the Prime Minister's constituency of Huntingdon.

This year, King's will have to save yet another £7·8 million as it prepares to become an opted-out trust with effect from 1 April next year. As part of the cuts programme, 120 beds have been closed in the past 18 months.

The brunt of those cuts has been borne, not by the national and regional specialties, but by the services for local people—my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham, particularly by the elderly.

The problems arising from the shortage of beds is evidenced almost every day by the queues of patients who have been through the casualty department and are waiting on trollies for a bed to become available. Too often, elderly people have to be admitted, not because they need hospital care, but because they cannot be looked after at home, as the community services have been cut. That shows the perversity of the sorry saga. The casualty department that was built to treat 30,000 patients a year, now regularly treats in excess of 80,000 a year.

We all celebrate King's status as a world-class hospital, but the health care of my constituents will be vulnerable if the Government allow market forces, not the health care needs of local people, to plan London's health services. It is particularly perverse that the hospital that can give the chance of life to someone, from wherever in the world, who needs a liver transplant, cannot admit an elderly lady who lives down the road and has broken her arm, without subjecting her to a long wait in one of its corridors before a bed becomes free.

I hope that the Minister shares my serious worry about these matters and that he will give answers that I can convey to my constituents.

12.1 am

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): I congratulate the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on his good fortune in securing this Adjournment debate and on the way in which he introduced it. I also thank the hon. Members for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) and for Dulwich (Ms. Jowell) for their contribution, and acknowledge the presence on the Opposition Front Bench

[Dr. Brian Mawhinney]

of the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman). All three of them will realise that they have taken a substantial amount of the time available for the debate, so my ability to respond to it has been curtailed. Therefore, I hope that they will not attribute the lack of specificity of my reply to any discourtesy.

The hon. Member for Tooting started by drawing attention to what he believed were the funding problems of trust hospitals and the issue of resources. Without much ado, I shall now address that worry, which was also reflected in the speeches of the other two hon. Members. It is important to understand that, taking the number of acute beds per thousand of the population as an index, in inner London the average is 4·1 and in England it is 2·5. Therefore, in terms of the provision of beds, inner London's quota is well in excess of the national average.

The figure for health revenue expenditure per thousand of the population in inner London is £445, and the average in England is £233. Those are pre-reform figures, but the position has not changed much in the past couple of years. Therefore, contrary to the impression given by the hon. Member for Tooting, the amount of resources spent in inner London is substantially greater than that available in the rest of the country.

I have another piece of information, the relevance of which I believe the hon. Gentleman will understand. The average cost per episode—Department of Health jargon for case—in inner London is £790. The figure for all acute cases in England is £546. The hon. Gentleman will see, therefore, that considerable extra resources are being put into London and that the cost of health care in London is higher than it is in the rest of the country.

The hon. Member for Tooting said that London finds money hard to come by. I remind him that we are in the same financial year as when the general election took place. He will know that the health budget this year rose by 5 per cent. in real terms.

I have noted the hon. Gentleman's point about the possible appointment of a chairman to the potential trust in which he takes a particular interest. If hon. Members have views about the names submitted for such an appointment, I shall be happy to receive them and to take them into account in the consultation process before deciding who should be chairman of a trust. I hope that they find that helpful.

NHS trusts are a central part of the reform programme set out in the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. The whole purpose behind the creation of NHS trusts is to improve the quality of health care and to produce benefits to patients. Since the Act came into force in 1990, 156 hospitals and units have become NHS trusts. Now, in the third year, there have been 151 applications so far.

The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green suggested that this process is driven by the Government. No so. It reflects the fact that the professional and managerial staff in the NHS are increasingly supporting the Government's reforms.

After the third wave, most NHS health care will be provided to patients through NHS trusts, with up to two thirds of eligible units established as trusts.

We have heard stories this evening of the kind that we often hear. The stories which I can contribute are based not on newspaper accounts but on the facts. NHS trusts in London increased their acute and general activity by more than 11 per cent. in 1991-92 compared with the previous year. The Royal London and associated hospitals NHS trust and the Royal National throat, nose and ear hospital NHS trust each increased its activity by more than 20 per cent.

The Royal National orthopaedic hospital has been able to reopen more than 40 beds which the district had previously had to close. It would have been slightly more convincing if the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green had balanced what she had to say about trusts with the record of non-trust hospitals, which experienced difficulties, financial problems and bed closures long before trusts were ever thought of.

As an example of the improvements that trusts have been able to make, the North Middlesex hospital will open a fourth theatre next month and is planning a major redevelopment of the A and E department. Mount Vernon hospital is purchasing several new pieces of equipment worth £4 million; these include a linear accelerator and two new magnetic resonance imaging scanners. The Central Middlesex hospital is now installing a magnetic resonance imaging scanner in a joint venture with a private company. The Royal Free Hampstead NHS trust has decreased the number of people waiting over a year for general surgery from 560 to just 18. At Guy's and Lewisham NHS trust, the number of patients waiting more than a year for treatment has come down from 2,200 in March 1991 to 680.

I do not suggest that trusts do not have continuing problems to deal with and to overcome, but it does them, and consequently the health care of the people of London, no service to suggest that trusts are inherently evil, non-productive and bad, and that the old system was great, good and marvellous. That was not the story that we heard in the days when trusts did not exist.

I deeply regret that I cannot deal with health care provision in London, but I have no more time. However, I have no doubt that, as we move through the year and when we receive the Tomlinson report, the matter will come before the House on a number of occasions and I look forward to future debates on it, not least because it is important that we should address the problems of London in a way that will protect the health care of its citizens while at the same time freeing resources to be spent in the other Thames regions and around the country.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock on Thursday evening, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at ten minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 19 June 1992

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Recycling

9.34 am

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): I beg to move,

That this House welcomes the Government's recent initiatives in the field of recycling, particularly the introduction of local government recycling plans; urges that further pressure be brought to bear on packagers and retailers to reduce unnecessary packaging and waste; and believes that further initiatives are required to encourage the use of reusable and returnable bottles and containers.

Unusually, this is also my maiden speech—unusually, but not without precedent. On 5 February 1960, a similar precedent was set by the then new hon. Member for Finchley—subsequently the Prime Minister, recently ennobled and sent to the other place—when she made her maiden speech on a motion concerning the admission of the press to local authority meetings. Although that was the start of a very illustrious career and of remarkable service to the country, I must tell the House that I do not expect that my career will necessarily follow hers just because I follow her precedent in this.

I do, however, follow in the footsteps of another illustrious and recently ennobled Member of Parliament, Nigel Lawson. He was the first Member of Parliament for Blaby, and his distinguished record of service to the country brought the name of Blaby to the attention of the nation. In paying tribute to him and in congratulating him on his elevation to the other place, I know that the people of Blaby would agree that he has also brought honour and distinction to the constituency. His is a very hard act to follow, but I shall try to heed his advice, including that given to me publicly at a dinner earlier this year in the House. He warned me that I should avoid the snares of over-generous hospitality and the pitfalls of over-regular use of the Dining Rooms. He told me that, when he entered the House, his figure was the same shape as mine. Although trying to follow that advice, I already feel the pressures on my waistband.

Blaby constituency is a prosperous area of south Leicestershire. It is a varied area of small towns and villages, and it is an attractive part of the county. The people whom I have the privilege to represent are industrious and friendly, and they vote with great good sense. The constituency is made up of the whole of Blaby district council and a part of Harborough district council. Both councils have great attributes and Blaby district council especially is a model of an efficient local authority, showing financial responsibility and excellent organisation.

Both councils have sensible and advanced recycling programmes and are on schedule for having statutory recycling plans in place by August. Blaby has 22 bottle banks and Harborough has 10. Harborough has six can collection sites and Blaby has three. Recycling collection points exist for textiles, oil, furniture and paper.

I know that my constituents and, I believe, the majority of people in the country are deeply concerned about our environment and share the sentiments expressed in the motion. According to *Eurobarometer*, recently quoted by the European Commission, 85 per cent. of Europeans consider the future of the environment to be an immediate and urgent problem which cannot be put off for future generations. In the light of such widespread popular concern, I draw the attention of the House to the issue of recycling.

I briefly remind the House of the major problems that are faced in dealing with the vast amount of packaging and waste—more than 100 million tonnes in total—which is produced each year in Britain. First, finite resources are used to produce packaging and containers which are not recycled, which are used once, which fill our dustbins and which are finally put in a hole in the ground. Secondly, the excessive use of energy in the production of packaging increases our production of greenhouse gases. Thirdly, 97 per cent. of waste presently goes into holes in the ground as landfill. Finally, there is the very real problem of litter. Packaging waste is inevitably a major contributor to litter, and packaging and containers are some of the most visible items of litter. Indeed, as I walked here today, I saw empty soft drink cans lying at the foot of the Jewel tower in Abingdon gardens. That is a sad comment on our society and possibly on our attitude to recycling.

The Government have a target that 50 per cent. of recyclable household waste should be recycled by the end of the decade and that local authorities must produce recycling plans by August. Those are excellent plans which all concerned with our environment welcome. At this point, I want to pay tribute to the very positive contribution of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the Earth summit at Rio. I was particularly pleased to hear his statement on Monday and especially to hear of the three new British initiatives.

The partnership in global technology mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—sharing our information with the developing countries—will, I trust, include recycling information and technology. In eastern Europe, because countries under communism could not afford excessive packaging, reusable and refillable containers and bottles are still in use. I understand that the arrival of western civilisation and economic prosperity may see the end of those ancient schemes. That may not be to the benefit of those countries in the long term. There is also no reason why developing countries should suffer from excessive and wasteful packaging, because they may be in a particularly good position to set up totally new environmentally friendly packaging schemes.

The Government's environmental strategy on excessive packaging the United Kingdom is also well stated especially in "This Common Inheritance", the White Paper presented in September 1990. It states:

"The Government is encouraging industry to reduce unnecessary packaging of consumer goods."

It also states that the Government are discussing targets and measures for reduction with industry and retailers. Those policies are very much going in the right direction and I welcome them. However, I hope that the Government will feel that they can go even further.

[Mr. Andrew Robathan]

I should like to draw the attention of the House to the draft directive of the Council of European Communities on packaging and packaging waste. That sensible document is currently under consideration and I hope that the Government will be able to support it. In particular, it calls for

"an integrated policy of waste management covering packaging and packaging waste."

Turning from policy to the current problems about the general issue of recycling, I want to draw the attention of the House to landfill. The EC draft directive to which I have referred, when discussing targets, states in article 4:

"Landfilling shall be relied upon only as a last resort."

That contrasts with a statement made by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning 10 days ago. When referring to the draft planning policy guidance note on planning and pollution control, he said:

"Demand for land-based facilities for waste management is growing rapidly."

While we would all agree with him that landfill will continue to have a part to play, many people believe that the true cost of landfill is not being reflected. I commend to my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside the following comment and second recommendation made last October by the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment to the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Trade and Industry:

"The price of landfill should be increased significantly to levels obtaining elsewhere in the EC."

I note that, in response, the Government agreed that the price of landfill is an important factor in the economics of recycling. A study in that area was to be concluded by May 1992. We await that study with interest. I commend to the Government the views of the European Commission and the advisory committee.

The next specific question relates to the disposal of sewage sludge. That has a certain urgency, given the ban on dumping at sea which will come into effect in 1998. Present and future policy, according to my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning 10 days ago, seems to lean towards landfill and incineration, neither of which is a satisfactory long-term solution.

I commend to my hon. Friend the Minister the process of recycling sewage sludge to produce envirosoil. That product can be used as a fertiliser, top soil or as a cover for landfill. It is odour free and has been approved by the United States Environmental Protection Agency. However, because of the danger of concentrations of heavy metals in sewage sludge, which can then leach into the water and soil, the process is not approved in this country. A standard leachate test should be developed with a particular application for envirosoil and its possible uses.

As the House will know, aluminium cans are one of the most valuable and easy waste products to recycle. There is a large new can recycling plant in Warrington. In a written reply a month ago to this very day, my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside stated that 11 per cent. of cans were recycled in 1991. That figure is more than double the 1990 figure and it is encouraging. However, that still means that 89 per cent. of cans were not recycled. That is a valuable product which has been wasted, buried in holes in the ground or is still littering our countryside.

The target of 50 per cent. of cans to be recycled by 1995 set by industry is too low. It should be possible to recycle almost all cans. My hon. Friend the Minister saw the can collection process at Milton Keynes last month. Is he aware that the large new plant in Warrington is still importing aluminium cans to recycle, apparently from America, with all the transport and environmental costs that that implies?

The bottle banks across the country are welcomed by all hon. Members. However, they produce a large surplus of green glass, as anyone who drinks wine and uses bottle banks will know. I understand that the Department of Trade and Industry is carrying out research into other uses for green glass. The Government should encourage industry to use more green glass in packaging. Consumers may initially resist that, but consumer choice is very largely influenced by retailers and advertisers who can explain the benefits of more green bottles. Such bottles could perhaps be used as milk bottles as green glass could protect the product from direct sunlight on the doorstep.

While welcoming the Government's initiatives in general on recycling, my hon. Friend the Minister will agree that there is more yet to be done and I am aware that much more is in the pipeline. I want to consider the issue of reducing unnecessary waste and packaging. In that respect, I will quote the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), who also believes that there is more to be done. In January, he said:

"In our White Paper on the Environment we said that we were encouraging industry to reduce unnecessary packaging of consumer goods. I do not think anyone could accuse us of being hasty in imposing 'solutions' on industry. But I have to say that the response from industry has been disappointing."

No one who has ever bought neatly wrapped vegetables in a supermarket and watched them being placed in another plastic bag can doubt that there is overpackaging. Anyone who returns from a supermarket and fills dustbins with packaging will be aware how much surrounds our food and other items. It is not for the convenience of the consumer that vegetables and fruit, often perfectly well packaged in their skins by the Almighty, end up double wrapped in supermarkets; it is for the convenience of retailers.

The House will agree with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury, with the comments in "This Common Inheritance", with the EC draft directive, with the housewives and house-husbands of Britain and with the Department of Environment recycling paper, which states:

"It is clearly better to avoid or minimise waste in the first place."

I am sure that the House would want my hon. Friend the Minister to take action to reduce excessive packaging.

My final topic is that of reusable and returnable containers. That point was also covered by the Department of Environment paper on recycling which states:

"It is clearly better to re-use a product where possible."

That is also the advice given by the Department to all citizens in a little pamphlet entitled "Green Rights and Responsibilities—A Citizens Guide to the Environment", printed, I believe, this year and, I am delighted to see, on recycled paper. The pamphlet states:

"What you can do—you can reduce the waste you produce by re-using things—rather than throwing them away."

We are all in this House, I fear, old enough to recall that almost all drinks bottles used to be returnable, often with a deposit and a penny back on the bottle. Beer and mineral water in Denmark may be sold only in glass packages. They achieve a return rate of 99 per cent. and have an average life of 33 trips per glass container. Furthermore, there is a charge levied on new bottles to encourage companies to refill used bottles. Many hon. Members wish to follow Denmark on other matters, but I say only that we should follow Denmark on reusable containers.

In Germany, the new packaging ordinance will lead to much greater use of reusable containers. We in this country currently return 95 per cent. of milk bottles, which are of course without deposit. A recent study in the Department of the Environment found that a deposit of 5p would achieve a return rate of 95 per cent. across all materials and beverage types. With or without deposits, we should be moving toward far greater use of returnable reusable containers. Alas, the opposite is the case.

As we know from personal experience, the throw-away, one-trip container is now the norm. From 1977 to 1987, the percentage of fizzy drinks sold in returnable bottles fell from 60 per cent. to 19 per cent. For beer the percentage fell from 60 per cent. to 23 per cent. No mineral water at all in the United Kingdom comes in returnable bottles, and mineral water, as the House knows, is now a very popular drink. Even the milk bottle—a great success story—is under threat and usage is falling. It appears that supermarkets are using milk in cartons as a loss leader, thereby reducing the use of returnable bottles and also threatening doorstep deliveries.

Commercial interests—perfectly understandable commercial interests—have taken us away from reusable containers. Pleading consumer choice, the convenience of retailers, particularly supermarkets, has been paramount. Last year a survey found that 84 per cent. of shoppers would return bottles to supermarkets if they could, especially if there were the incentive of a deposit. The response of supermarkets to that survey was largely negative or even hostile. In 1981, the study of returnable bottles by the Waste Management Advisory Council stated:

"The stocking policy of supermarkets favours non-returnables."

The marketing director of a supermarket chain put very succinctly what I believe is the logical future facing us. He said:

"The way forward muct be multi-trip and refillable bottles —that is very much part of Gateway's future."

For it is not just nostalgia, me or consumers who want reusable containers. Article 13 of the draft European Commission directive states:

"The Commission shall promote . . . European standards relating in particular to dimensions and shapes of packaging . . . in order to facilitate its re-use."

It specifically mentions multi-trips. That is a step towards refillable systems and it threatens the continued use of one-trip containers. That is the logical way forward. I urge the Government to support that EC measure and to take steps to persuade British industry to move in that direction.

I draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister to paragraph 14.17 of the 1990 White Paper on the environment, entitled "Our Common Inheritance", which states:

"The Government will encourage improvements in packaging design which will . . . promote . . . re-use. While the Government intends to proceed by voluntary means, it will if necessary consider the introduction of regulatory measures, such as deposit schemes."

That is a sensible policy which I wholeheartedly support.

I hope that the House will support the motion and will agree that the Government's measures are an excellent move in the right direction and that yet further progress on recycling can be achieved.

9.53 am

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan). I enjoyed listening to his maiden speech as it was extremely well informed. I agree with everything that he said, except in his praise for the Government. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his speech. I think that he was slightly misled by his predecessor, who claimed that he was a thin figure when he came to the House. I must admit that I remember him sniping from the Opposition Benches between 1974 and 1979, and he was already a fairly square figure. Some hon. Members will remember him more for his effective sniping than for his ministerial roles.

I am glad that I did not wait to make my maiden speech until I won the ballot for private motions, having entered, not every time, but fairly consistently since 1974 and never coming first. I can understand the hon. Gentleman's pleasure in winning, I suppose, not quite at his first attempt but so early in his career. I congratulate him on choosing the subject of recycling. I hope that many Conservative Members will speak on the subject. The sad thing for me is that, since I came to the House in 1974, I have heard many good speeches on recycling, but very little action has occurred. I fear that the hon. Gentleman may have to recycle his speech before he gets some action by the Government. Their record is not good on making progress on this important subject.

I fear that the Government's belief in capitalism and the monetary system is part of the problem; we cannot expect companies whose main aim is to make a profit to be concerned about protecting the environment in the long term. Just as I appreciate the way in which coal mine owners in the previous century sold their coal to pay for the cost of producing it, but took no account of the cost of clearing slagheaps, cleaning towns, or the damage to health that they caused, so I fear that too many of today's manufacturers take no account of the environmental impact of their products and the cost of clearing up the mess. We must have a means of imposing regulations on manufacturers. That must be done through the democratic process in which we discuss the merits of certain regulations or, if the Government prefer, a tax policy that ensures that the polluter and the misuser of resources pay. I fear that in the Government's White Paper and their exhortation for action there is no clear programme which will force manufacturers to take account of the environmental impact of their products.

I agree with the hon. Member for Blaby that the first culprit is the packaging industry. Ever since I came to the House, I have received glossy brochures telling me that companies are doing their best to reduce packaging and to make it more environmentally friendly. That is rubbish. The packaging industry has not made one jot of effort to be more environmentally friendly.

I give the House an example of the way in which we waste resources. Yesterday, I slipped into a shop and

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

purchased a shirt. The shirt was beautifully wrapped. I opted for a cheap one, otherwise I could have had a shirt in a cardboard box. The manufacturer had wrapped the shirt in polythene. One has a job ripping off the polythene. Inside the polythene is cardboard, pins and paper clips. People say, "Shirts have always come like that." Of course they have always come like that.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): Not in that colour, they haven't.

Mr. Bennett: As my hon. Friend says, they may not have come in that colour.

Women's blouses are sold on coathangers. Blouses and shirts are basically the same types of garment. Women's blouses have traditionally come with virtually no wrapping around them, yet men's shirts are over-packed. Three quarters of the packaging ends up in the dustbin. There is a good chance that a couple of pins will prick the person who is trying to get the shirt out of the packaging. If not all pins are removed, there are further problems. Manufacturers continue to wrap shirts in that way and produce much rubbish—plastic, paper and pins which are not easy to recycle. It is absolutely amazing that shirt manufacturers cannot find a way of selling shirts without that great waste of packaging and resources.

But there are small ways in which resources are wasted. A few years ago London Underground announced great plans to introduce new automatic ticket machines. There was much criticism of those machines. Some people described them as rottweilers. One of the interesting things about them was that they doubled the size of the ticket. I cannot understand why that was necessary. Again, it caused the misuse of a great deal of extra paper or cardboard.

The House of Commons is not entirely without blame in the matter of wasted paper. When one wanders round the building one notices all the material that comes in from outside, such as unsolicited advertising material. It seems that when public relations firms and PR departments of companies have leaflets left over they wonder where to send them. Instead of sending them directly to be recycled they post them to Members of Parliament.

We are all guilty. We all go to the Vote Office and pick out a copy of *Hansard*, flick through for our own speech or a question to which we want to refer, tear it out and throw the rest in the bin. The ridiculous thing is that the *Hansard* writers now put speeches into a computer so that it can go to the printers. But can we obtain a print-out of the parts of *Hansard* that we want? Of course, we cannot. It is still easier to waste the paper.

The hon. Member for Blaby referred to the problem of supermarkets. A tremendous number of packages are wrapped. The manufacturers tell us that packages must be superwrapped and super-superwrapped to prevent tampering on the shelves. That really means that they cannot look after the shelves so they prefer to wrap things many times to stop tampering. I suspect that overwrapped packages contribute to a large number of accidents in households. Increasingly, people find it difficult to pierce the wrapping. I have come across several examples of elderly people with arthritic hands who find it difficult to pierce wrapping. They attack the wrapping with a sharp knife or other implement and end up cutting themselves.

I should much prefer to see pressure put on the supermarkets to make greater use of many-trip bottles, as the hon. Member for Blaby suggested. I teased the Minister slightly at Question Time on Wednesday about what washing-up liquid he used. I am not sure whether he has worked out which washing up liquid he uses at home. A product called Ecover makes great claims to be environmentally friendly. *[Interruption.]* I am not sure whether the Minister just said that it does not work but I think that it does a good job.

Interestingly, the last claim on the back of the Ecover bottle is that the bottle is recyclable. It can be turned into fence posts and carrier bags. I am not certain that we are all that short of fence posts in Britain and I cannot see any sense in which we are short of carrier bags. I should have thought that it would be far better for a product which claims to be environmentally friendly to encourage people to reuse the plastic container. It should be easy for people to go back to the supermarket and simply have it reloaded with washing-up liquid. That should be simpler than taking it to a recycling bank where plastic material is collected. As the hon. Member for Blaby said, a considerable amount of energy is used in turning plastic collected at a bank into some other plastic product.

The Prime Minister has told us that he intends to ensure that all the bottles from No. 10 Downing Street go to bottle banks. It would be far better if he ensured that No. 10 purchased only bottles that were returnable and reusable. Tht would be better than sending bottles back to be smashed up. A great deal more energy is used to recycle bottles than it takes to reuse them.

So I am on common ground with the hon. Member for Blaby. I should like to see far more bottles make many trips. British manufacturers keep telling us that that is impossible, but it happens in many countries in Europe. I remember making a speech early in my career in the House a little along the lines of the hon. Gentleman's speech today. I was invited by a manufacturer to see a machine that would take back bottles and refund the money in the supermarket. People could simply put the bottle on the machine, wait for it to go through and receive the refund. He never managed to have those machines placed in British supermarkets but they are fairly commonplace in Europe. I firmly argue that we need to use many-trip bottles, with a deposit if necessary, rather than returning so many bottles to bottle banks to be smashed up and reused. Even more bottles are simply left lying about.

We must also examine products to ensure that they can be repaired rather than thrown away. I understand that the Department of the Environment is working hard in Europe on eco-labels or green labels. I understand that the Department has a responsibility for washing machines. One of the problems with washing machines is what happens to them at the end of their life cycle. I make a plea to the Minister to ensure that the life cycle of the washing machine is as long as possible. Washing machines should be designed to use the minimum heat and water to do an efficient job. They should use the detergent or washing powder that is most environmentally friendly. But will the Minister also ensure that washing machines can be conveniently repaired on a regular basis and that they are fitted with parts that can be replaced rather than, as happens so often with consumer products, having to be thrown away after a relatively short life?

One of the saddest things is that while the Minister goes along with the idea of local authorities recycling by

separating out materials, there will be a problem with the guaranteed price for those materials. During my time in the House I have noticed that it becomes fashionable to collect waste paper or bottles, everyone starts doing it and the price of waste paper or glass drops. Certainly, many voluntary groups find that they cannot raise enough funds by collecting the material so they stop doing it. The whole thing falls into disrepute.

The only way that I can see of tackling the problem is for the Government to set a price below which the price of collected waste cannot fall. If it is reasonable to set a floor price for agricultural products, the Government could create a floor price for such a serious matter as recycled products. I understand the Minister's reluctance. He has just come from a Department that had to deal with butter mountains. I am not sure that a mountain of cans or waste paper would be any easier to deal with. However, if recycling is to be a success over a long period, the Government cannot let the bottom fall out of the market each time that a scheme is put in place so that the viability of the scheme collapses.

I was interested in the comments that the hon. Member for Blaby made about compost. It is a great tragedy that so much of our peatland is being destroyed. If we had an effective composting system a great deal of that peat could be preserved and we could also avoid much of the landfill that currently takes places.

I am aware that the Government encourage local authorities to encourage consumers and householders to separate materials at home for collection. There are schemes in Sheffield and elsewhere under which people are asked to put cans, bottles and paper in separate containers and either return them to collection banks or leave them to be collected by the authority.

A scheme was introduced in Greater Manchester in which the local authority collected all the waste in one waste cart and separated it later. Greater Manchester waste disposal authority had an experimental plant at Radcliffe which demonstrated that the authority could separate for recycling almost all the products from the household dustbin. Unfortunately, the Government were never prepared to give the authority the money to develop the experimental plant to one which could operate on a large scale. I have received brochures from people trying to set up such a plant elsewhere in Britain, but no one seems to have managed to operate post-collection separation effectively.

Much as I appreciate schemes in which the householder sorts refuse, they can only sort about 30 per cent. A post-collection system would be far more effective, but some Government investment is required to encourage the setting up of a plant to do the sorting. The Government must guarantee prices so that a substantial plant may be set up in the knowledge that one can get a reasonable price for the plastic, paper or compost which is separated from household refuse.

When the Minister for the Environment and Countryside replies to the debate, I shall be interested to hear what he has to say about whether there should be pre or post-collection sorting. Whichever system is chosen a guaranteed price is important if we are to create long-term stability for recycling.

My plea to the Minister is along the lines of that of the hon. Member for Blaby—to be tough with the packaging industry and to insist on minimum packaging to eliminate the creation of unnecessary waste; to ensure a guaranteed market for recycled materials; and to take some initiatives and consider whether pre or post-collection sorting is more effective and if post-collection sorting is decided upon, to provide investment to build the necessary plants. We plead with the Government not to be side-tracked into thinking that it is environmentally friendly to find ways to burn refuse. I understand the arguments for producing power from waste, but that is a waste of resources. We do not need dramatic new sources of energy. We need to conserve and to use far less energy.

The Government must intervene; they cannot leave it to market forces. They must decide whether to ensure that the polluter and the waster of resources pay, through a tax system or possibly through regulation.

I welcome the opportunity for debate and will listen with interest to the Minister. I shall also be interested to find out how many Conservative Members follow the debate and whether this is merely an example of one Conservative Member coming up with the right ideas or whether the idea of recycling has now spread to the Conservative Benches.

10.12 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I suppose that it ought to be a question of *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*—one should not speak ill of parliamentary colleagues departed. However, truth to tell, I was not an admirer of the style or content of Nigel Lawson and I sat through far too many Finance Bills with him to be other than candid about the matter. I would say this of few political opponents, but he was a politician who did great harm to this country for 20 years. There has been a great improvement in the representation of the Blaby constituency. In all those years, I never heard Nigel Lawson make such a constructive speech as that made by the new hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan). Like my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), I listened to him with great interest and attention, and I hope that what he had to say will be taken seriously by the Government. I also thought that his remarks were well structured and I congratulate him on his maiden speech.

The hon. Member for Blaby referred to Rio. Although there is a debate on Rio next Thursday, one question follows from the hon. Member's remarks: the Minister for the Environment and Countryside had the good fortune to be at Rio and I suspect that he may be in a position to answer it. I preface my question by saying that I support the Darwin initiative. As the Minister knows, I have intimate contacts with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and with the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh. My question for the Minister is one that my colleagues on the biological sciences advisory committee of the university of Edinburgh will ask me at our next meeting on 3 July. The question is, what new resources will be available as a result of what happened in Rio? Statements of intent should not be discounted, but I hope that the Minister will deal with the subject of money and resources which will now be available and which were not available before the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister answering the debate went to Rio. Will new scientific contacts be available? What is new? I sincerely hope for a constructive answer.

I deplore what the Danish voters have rightly or wrongly done in their referendum, but I must repeat the question asked by the hon. Member for Blaby. Denmark

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has been innovative in recycling. It is said that each bottle in Denmark has 33 trips. Therefore, have we anything to learn from the Danes and is the Department doing anything to find out how they are conducting their recycling operations and the costs? I understand that that operation is more expensive than it has been made out to be, but it is worth studying and I hope that the question of the hon. Member for Blaby will be answered.

The Dalai Lama made a moving speech on 16 September 1990 in Vermont and has since repeated the sentiments, not least when he was a guest of the House of Commons. He said:

"Mother planet is showing us the red warning light. She is telling us to take care of our house, the planet."

If I were giving a sermon this morning, that would be the text. Everything has to be seen against the background of care of the planet. It is one of the most telling commentaries on the nature of our voracious oil consumption that humanity is burning as much fossil fuel every 12 months as it took a million years to produce. We are facing an environmental abyss and we have to do something about environmental overloading.

I agree with the hon. Member for Blaby that possibly the best thing to do is to minimise waste in the first place. Any idea that the alarm bells are false and need not be heeded is make-believe. We must consider recycling against the background of overall strategy.

Will the Minister tell the House what is being done to encourage manufacturers to design for recycling at the beginning of product manufacture and planning? The death of a product should be considered at its birth. I will not inflict the whole speech on the House, but I should like to recall what I said on 28 March 1973 on my 10-minute Re-cycling of Components of Used Motor Vehicles Bill. I asked:

"That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require manufacturers of motor vehicles to design such vehicles, after 31st December 1975, so that their components can be easily re-cycled, so saving the raw material for further use."

I went on to say:

"In view of the fact that there are 40 speakers in the debate on Northern Ireland I will bring in what will be a Two-Minute Rule Bill."

We were about to have a major Irish debate and it would not have been tactful to have spoken longer than was necessary to expand on the subject. I said:

"This Bill is first of all about finite resources—that is, that if at the design stage, the eventual death of the vehicle were taken into account much more metal and other material could be recaptured from used cars than would otherwise be the case on current designs. The crucial thing is that thought should be given at the design stage and that the eventual death of the vehicles should be taken into account.

I will spare the House all the technical details, and will just say that Donald Jensen, the Directors of Emission of Ford, Michigan, Chrysler and Leyland have all made the point that the recapturing of material would be much easier and of higher quality if it were thought about at the design stage, and metals made more easily separable."

My hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) will speak about polyethylenes. It is easily understood that mixtures of polyethylene and copper make it far harder to repossess the quality of copper that is desirable for industry. I then said:

"The second point is that this Bill would give every economic incentive to people who were willing to take their cars to a metal recapturing unit. In a sense, it would serve also to do something about all those dumps of disused vehicles that litter the whole of Western Europe."

That remains the case. I understand from recent inquiries that not much effort is made to provide an economic incentive to recycle the waste in those unsightly dumps which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish said, litter our countryside. I then pointed out:

"It may well be said that this is all very well but why on earth should legislation, why should a Bill, be necessary? For one rather self-evident reason, really, that no single company is going to go ahead and take on the extra costs of doing this at an early stage of the design, if other manufacturing bodies are not going to do the same thing, because then that company would be at a competitive disadvantage."—[*Official Report*, 28 March 1973; Vol. 853, c. 1316-17.]

That is at the heart of much of today's debate. If that is true of motor vehicles, it is true of many other products. Given competition, it is extremely difficult to persuade individual companies to take the first step that puts them at a disadvantage vis-a-vis their competitors. It is not easy to get round that, but if we do not do so, we shall not ensure the work at the design stage that is absolutely crucial to fruitful recycling. It is a case of the chicken and the egg.

I ask the Government to reflect on that. I am not so unreasonable as to ask for a considered opinion today, but I should like a letter after the Minister has been able to talk to his professional advisers, not only in the Department of the Environment—one of the troubles is that this matter straddles a number of Departments—but in the Department of Trade and Industry and, indeed, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

An additional problem is that success may not be possible on a one-country basis for precisely the same reasons. If one country proceeds while its competitors do not, it takes no imagination to know what would happen to its commerce as a result of its being prepared to undertake a proper, enlightened recycling policy.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): There is good news in the pipeline. The European Community Commission is considering a draft directive to deal with the problem of vehicle waste management. In France, Peugeot-Talbot has a £3 million project under way in Lyons and in Britain, ironically, but perhaps as a lesson for our own industry, the German producer BMW is setting up a vehicle dismantling plant. As my hon. Friend said, the news would be even better if the Government were actively involved.

Mr. Dalyell: My hon. Friend has experience of the European Parliament and is an extremely constructive, well-informed Member of this House. I am particularly glad of that intervention because a recycling policy must be on a European or, indeed, international basis.

I draw to the attention of the House the letter sent to many hon. Members from Sir Michael Atiyah, president of the Royal Society, and co-signed by Dr. Frank Press of the United States National Academy of Sciences. There considered view on international action is as follows:

"There is an urgent need to address economic activity, population growth, and environmental protection as interrelated issues. The forthcoming UN conference on Environment and Development, to be held in Brazil, should consider human activities and population growth, in both the developing and developed worlds, as crucial components affecting the sustainability of human society. Effective family planning, combined with continued economic and social development in the LDCs, will help stabilize fertility rates at lower levels and reduce stresses to the global environment. At

the same time, greater attention in the developed countries to conservation, recycling, substitution and efficient use of energy, and a concerted program to start mitigating further buildup of greenhouse gases will help to ease the threat to the global environment."

It is the "concerted effort" that is so crucial. When the Minister replies I hope that he will tell us what the Government's thoughts are on concerted recycling efforts in both developed and developing countries. His Department will have taken into account the United Nations Development Programme report. Page 5 states:

"In Africa, UNDP is funding nearly 200 waste management projects costing almost $150 million. They range from solid waste management and waste water treatment to garbage disposal and recycling of wastes. For example, in Niamey, Niger, a pilot project is under way to construct 42 latrines for four schools to improve health and sanitation."

I should be grateful if the Minister would say something about reaction to UNDP report.

The question of envirosoil and the recycling of soil has been considered, but not elaborated upon. More than a tenth of the world's soils have lost a substantial amount of their natural fertility in the past 45 years; that fact is the first result of the 15-year global assessment on soil degradation funded by the United Nations Environment Programme. Some of the worst losses are in Europe where 17 per cent. of the soils have been seriously damaged by human activity, including mechanised farming and the fall-out from acid rain.

The findings published, for the first time, in the latest volume on world resources produced by the World Resources Institute were described by its editor, Alan Hammond, as

"far more shocking than the loss of the rain forests".

That is a controversial view. I have had two Adjournment debates on the subject of rain forests and neither I nor the hon. Member for Gravehsam (Mr. Arnold) can be accused of not being concerned about the rain forests. Nevertheless, it is an educated and informed opinion and it is based on the assessments made by more than 250 specialists working for the United Nations around the world.

Other high incidences of soil losses occur in central America and Mexico where

"24 per cent. of soils are seriously degraded, often following deforestation and, in Africa, with 14 per cent. much of it caused by wind erosion from over-grazed pastures in arid areas such as the Sahel and much of southern Africa."

Only 8 per cent. of the soil in south America has so far been degraded. The hon. Member for Gravesham takes a great interest in Brazil and it was my pleasure to support him as chairman of the British-Brazil group and of the British-Latin America group. He understands very well the problems in those areas and he will agree that soil degradation in South America is becoming, year by year, a more urgent problem.

The World Resources Institute described its findings as

"an early warning that we are losing potential agricultural productivity that may be critical in providing food and other essential needs for a burgeoning global population. Without soil degradation, gains in agricultural output achieved through improved technology would have been even higher."

The report defines seriously degraded soils as those which either cannot be restored to their former productivity or can be restored only with major construction efforts such as drainage projects or soil conservation terraces and banks that are beyond the ability of individual farmers.

The report also reveals that two thirds of the degraded soils are in Africa and Asia, where most of the poor live and where Governments have little money for extensive soil conservation programmes. Often degraded land is simply abandoned. The figures are inevitably controversial. A third of the total degradation is put down to over-grazing in arid lands, but there is continuing disagreement over how to measure land degradation in such areas and how much can be put down to the impact of humans and animals and how much to changes in climate. Deforestation and poor farming practices are each responsible for about 30 per cent. of soil degradation worldwide.

The report adds that such human activities leave soils exposed to water and wind erosion. They may cause chemical deterioration through loss of nutrients or the accumulation of salts and acids and physical deterioration through compaction by heavy machinery and water-logging. In Europe, an estimated 20 million hectares of soils have been seriously damaged by industrial activity, mostly by air pollution, such as acid rain and the fall-out of heavy metals. Towns in the upper Silesian industrial belt of Poland have the highest levels of lead and cadmium reported anywhere in the world, reaching 19,000 parts per million around Katowice.

I have not been to Poland, but I went with the all-party heritage group to Czechoslovakia. On the Polish border, in Bohemia, one can understand exactly how serious the situation has become.

It is difficult to do anything quickly about acid rain and even more difficult to do anything quickly about erosion. Therefore, we have to consider what can be done to produce envirosoils, and that means recycling much of human industrial activity. Do the Government appreciate the urgency and importance of recycling in relation to the production of—I will not say compost—soil?

I have not decided suddenly to raise this matter in the House. It is a bit irresponsible to raise a subject in such detail without having done anything about it first. In early May I raised this matter with Earl Howe, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. He courteously replied to me on 4 June—as a help to the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, the reference is 55332—and stated:

"We view with concern the findings of the UNEP report and the implications for world resources. Officials are closely involved with collaborative international action on soil protection. This includes a Council of Europe initiative which has retained the original UNEP consultants to reassess the information in more detail as the basis for a European Handbook on Soil Protection and an OECD group which is currently examining several international aspects of soil protection."

How seriously do the Government take those groups? Earl Howe also stated:

"Soil protection problems vary considerably within countries and we therefore believe that responsibility for action should lie principally with national Governments."

Do the Government believe that international action should be taken about soil protection? It seems from the MAFF reply that responsibility will be left with national Governments. The letter also states:

"In the UK the need for soil protection is taken into account in relevant policy decisions. Examples include the control of waste disposal, including sewage sludge application to agricultural land and increasing controls on atmospheric emissions of heavy metals and acidifying materials. Other schemes such as those for Environmentally Sensitive Areas,

[Mr. Dalyell]

although aimed more generally at the protection of the countryside also have a beneficial impact; a particular case in point being the South Downs ESA.

The Government is committed to publishing a Code of Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Soil which will give practical advice to farmers on how to minimise soil degradation. In addition, this Department will be spending £1·6 million on an extensive R & D programme for 1992-93 on various aspects of soil protection."

I have asked for an interview with Earl Howe to consider this subject in more detail. However, I should be grateful for any general statement in the House now on the Government's attitude, because the issue straddles MAFF and the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Has my hon. Friend given thought to the latest threat to soil quality resulting from the burning of orimulsion without the appropriate flue gas desulphurisation and other measures to prevent heavy metals from getting through, in addition to acid rain getting on to the soil? Has he received any comments on that in correspondence that he may have had with Government Departments and Her Majesty's inspectors?

Mr. Dalyell: For 26 years I have been a weekly columnist for *New Scientist*. I have received a particularly well-informed letter about desulphurisation, the gist of which says that if Governments or organisations are prepared to pay for desulphurisation—the same applies to dealing with heavy metals, particularly the problem of cadmium—steps can be taken, but it is a question of money and resources. It is make-believe to think that the problem can be tackled on the cheap. It requires a great deal of money and some may agree that it is money well spent. So I turn my hon. Friend's well-informed question to the Minister and ask what the Department thinks about it.

Mr. Bennett: I understand that the desulphurisation process is not all that difficult but that it involves in many cases the use of limestone, and we must consider how rapidly the limestone uplands of this country are disappearing. Rather than creating a problem involving desulphurisation, it would be better to get to the root of the problem and that involves cutting down the nation's energy requirements. Much energy is being wasted. If we began from that end of the problem, we could do more for the environment by keeping down energy consumption.

Mr. Dalyell: I am sympathetic to my hon. Friend's comments. In relation to limestone, he will recall that he and I took part in the Committee stage of the Wildlife and Countryside Bill in 1981, during which there was discussion about the future of the limestone pavements in part of the northern area of Lancashire and Cheshire near Morecambe.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): In Cumberland.

Mr. Dalyell: The former Government Chief Whip will forgive me. It is, of course, in Cumbria, and the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), a former Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, knows well the problems of the limestone pavements and of other limestone areas in this country. I can only say amen to what my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish said on the subject. While it may not be strictly in order in this debate, a statement on the limestone position in Britain would be well received.

I am nearing the end of mny remarks, but I must say semi finally——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): My hon. Friend sounds as though he is about to comment on a football match.

Mr. Dalyell: I wish to refer to what is called toxic colonialism and to ask what we can do about it. A global convention intended to regulate international trade in hazardous waste came into force last month. The treaty is likely to be weakened further if European Community Environment Ministers decide to exploit loopholes in the convention so as to allow unregulated shipments of waste.

The Basle convention was drawn up to stop the third world becoming a dumping ground for the west's industries, but only 22 of the 105 countries involved signed the final agreement at the founding conference. Those countries that have not ratified it include some of the world's largest waste exporters, including the United States, Canada and all the EC nations except France.

European Ministers are eager to agree a draft regulation that would enshrine the terms of the convention in Community law before the start of the summit. Has that happened? What is the attitude of the British Government to what in shorthand must be called toxic colonialism? The convention lays down procedures for transporting hazardous waste from one country to another and charges both the exporting and importing country with making sure that the waste is disposed of in an environmentally sound manner.

Another key component of the treaty is that the receiving country must have agreed to take in the waste before it is shipped. That is meant to prevent the recurrence of incidents such as the fiasco in 1988 when the cargo ship Karin B loaded with toxic waste was forced to sail from port to port seeking permission to unload. African countries, which are prime dumping sites, and environmental groups wanted the Basle convention to ban outright the shipping of hazardous waste. Instead, the convention makes it legitimate.

Critics now argue that what constitutes environmentally sound disposal is poorly defined in that what is allowed in one country can be banned in others. Nor does the convention have teeth. Enforcement is left to individual countries. Despite those criticisms, many environmentalists believe that the treaty is vastly preferable to measures adopted by the rich nations of the OECD.

In March, under pressure from the recycling industry, the organisation agreed measures that created a green list of hazardous substances that would be exempt from the convention's regulations when transported between OECD countries. What did the recycling industry tell the Government about that? European Ministers are considering including a green list in Community regulations. The substances on the green list are supposedly recyclable. They include noxious materials such as lead, cadmium and thalium wastes. I understand that the recycling industry argues that the materials in which it trades are not wastes and should be excluded from the convention.

John Clubb, of the British Scrap Federation, also argues that the treaty would be damaging to business and says that writing to a Government Department giving 30 days' notice of export would kill the trade. We cannot dismiss the concerns of the trade. I have some regard for the trade because it does a job which must be done. There is no point in simply attacking firms that do dirty jobs.

I should like to know what pressure the industry put on, whether that pressure was legitimate, and what has been the Government's response. The essential criterion in deciding which substances should be allowed on the green list is non-dispersability. That is the argument of the earth resources centre at the university of Exeter put by Paul Johnston. If the waste is in big enough chunks and will not dissolve or break up, it can be transported. That definition, says Johnston, must be regarded as highly subjective, with little scientific foundation.

Many residues from recycling processes are hazardous. For example, burning plastic-coated copper wire, which is on the green list, releases highly toxic dioxins. That is an attempt to remove the end stage of industrial process to other countries while appearing to promote recycling. It is sneaky and fundamentally dishonest.

I have spoken to friends from Nigeria and they have argued that, in the past, they have had to accept substances that they did not want to accept in order to obtain currency because they were short of money. The problem is repeated in an endless number of developing countries. It is downright immoral, because reprocessing and recycling should be done by countries that are technically most competent to do it.

Although the view has landed me in all sorts of political difficulties, I believe that the same applies to nuclear waste. Britain should accept all the most uncomfortable wastes from other people because we are the most technically competent people on the face of the planet to deal with them. It is a question not of money but of considering the planet as a whole.

The Sunday Times asked me to review Sonny Ramphal's book, "Our Country the Planet". I was greatly influenced by the theme that the former Secretary General of the Commonwealth took up in suggesting that we could get together with developing countries to look after the planet. We are one planet and if those residues exist, someone somewhere must cope with them. It is wrong to send them to Burkina Faso or to people who are unable to cope with them when we, at a price, can cope with the challenge and have the scientific competence to do so. I speak for no one but myself, but in public and in private I feel very strongly about that. We have the technical capability to do that whereas developing countries have not. We therefore have a moral obligation to humankind to cope, even if it creates a public outrage. In coping, it is a question not of being NIMBY but of thinking about where it can be done acceptably. The condition of all that is technical competence.

Many residues from recycling processes are hazardous. If European Environment Ministers throw out the green list, the Community regulation still threatens the Basle convention. Another proposal that will be considered by Ministers allows bilateral agreements between the Community and any country that would ignore all the safeguards of the convention. Both those contentious proposals exploit loopholes in the wording of the convention. They certainly do not honour its spirit. That is the Greenpeace view.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Dalyell: I, too, might shake my head, but Greenpeace must be answered on that.

As is my wont, I did not suddenly raise this subject in the House without having gone to the Department first. On 11 May, I raised those points with Lord Strathclyde, Under-Secretary of State for the Environment and former Minister at the Scottish Office. His reply was:

"We make a distinction between waste for disposal and waste for reuse or recovery. Our policy is that all developed countries should become self-sufficient in disposing of their own waste. The United Kingdom has the facilities to be able to dispose of all waste arising in this country. We are prepared to allow developing countries which do not have suitable disposal facilities to continue to have access to United Kingdom facilities. This ensures that waste is managed in an environmentally sound manner."

So far, so good, but the letter is carefully worded. It says:

"We are prepared to allow developing countries . . . to continue to have access to United Kingdom facilities."

If that is allowed now, do developing countries have any guarantee that it will be allowed for ever, or do we tell them that, because of public opinion in this country, in so many years' time they must cope with their own waste? That is a crucial policy commitment.

Lord Strathclyde goes on to say:

"We are pressing for rapid progress on an EC Regulation on the Supervision and Control of Shipments of Waste within, into and out of the European Community. The Regulation is intended to implement the UNEP Basel Convention which has introduced a framework of global controls on hazardous waste movements. Under the current draft of the Regulation no exports or final disposal would be allowed from the Community, except to EFTA countries."

Is there to be a change on that? What is the Government's attitude to the draft regulation? Lord Stratchclyde continues:

"In the case of waste destined for recovery, there are good economic and environmental arguments for allowing such movements to continue subject to appropriate controls. Recovery of wastes results in savings in terms of consumption of energy and natural resources. Such materials can also play a major role in the industries of developing countries."

That is a helpful statement, but what are the Government doing about helping to solve the problem of materials that can also play a major role in industries of developing countries? Lord Strathclyde said:

"Negotiations are in progress on the issue of exempting from control under the Regulation the movement of certain basically non-hazardous wastes destined for recovery—the OECD "Green List" wastes. We consider that controlling such wastes outside OECD, while allowing them to move freely within OECD, would represent discriminatory practices in breach of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The current draft of the Regulation allows for exports outside OECD of hazardous recoverables with the consent of the receiving country and subject to controls in bilateral agreements designed to ensure that the environment is protected. Imports of hazardous recoverables would also be subject to control."

What has the Department of the Environment done about that?

Lord Strathclyde's final paragraph reads:

"As far as nuclear waste is concerned, the position is that no radioactive waste is imported into the United Kingdom. Spent nuclear fuel is not regarded as waste but as a resource which can be reprocessed. Since 1976, British Nuclear Fuels Limited's contracts have contained options for the return to the countries of origin of wastes which arise here from the processing of spent nuclear fuel. We intend that these options will be exercised and the wastes returned."

Under what conditions should waste be returned?

Mr. Tony Banks: My hon. Friend is on to a significant point. I understand from the reports of the agreement reached between Presidents Bush and Yeltsin on the dismantling and destruction of long-range nuclear weapons that that will produce some 100 tonnes of plutonium. We were worried that a few grammes of the stuff in the Gulf might be enough to cause a catastrophe if in the wrong hands. What on earth are we to do? How does the world get rid of 100 tonnes of plutonium? It has been suggested that it could be put in a rocket and aimed at the sun. Does my hon. Friend, with his scientific background, consider that to be an appropriate method of disposal?

Mr. Dalyell: I have raised with the Ministry of Defence defence against asteroids and I am rather interested in space at present, but I would not presume to comment off the top of my head on the viability of rockets. However, my hon. Friend raises a serious issue. What is happening in relation both to civil nuclear power stations in the Soviet Union and to Soviet weapons is possibly more worrying than any concerns that we might have had about nuclear disarmament in the 1960s.

May I answer my hon. Friend's question in two parts. First, I am very close to Scottish Nuclear. I praise James Hann, Ian Preston and their colleagues for having established a twinning arrangement with the Soviet nuclear power station at Smolensk and for having sent some of their best experts, with experience of Hunterston, Torness and elsewhere, to Kozloduy, the Bulgarian nuclear power station which is possibly the most at risk because the Bulgarian Government refuse to close it: one can understand why. The provision of power to boil kettles in Sofia is dependent upon it. The position, therefore, is not easy for the Bulgarian Government. None the less, it is a matter of great concern that, as these power stations age, safety becomes paramount. The last thing that the nuclear industry in Britain, the United States or anywhere else wants is yet another Chernobyl. The constructive answer to my hon. Friend is that Scottish Nuclear and others should be encouraged in the good job that they are already doing in keeping in touch and sending their experts to eastern Europe.

Secondly, weapons deterioration is exceedingly alarming. With the break-up of the Soviet Union, many of those who were charged with the maintenance of these weapons are spending more time on trying to keep home and family together than on doing their job. If I may be personal, some six months ago I had as my guest one of the professors of physics at the university of Moscow. My daughter asked him a fairly artless question about the time that he spent doing his work in the university. His reply was, "Look, my dear. I spend more time queueing for bread and meat than I do on nuclear physics." One can imagine——

Mr. Tony Banks: Yes, I can indeed. A number of hon. Members have called on western European Governments and the Government of the United States to make sure that the estimated 100,000 or so nuclear scientists and technicians within the old Soviet Union area are guaranteed their income by the Governments of the west. That seems to me a sensible investment of money. It would ensure that the technicians are there and that any dismantling of nuclear weapons is carried out in the best scientific way. If they have to spend their time queueing for bread and sausages, they are unlikely to be looking after nuclear weapons.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. We seem to be straying a long way away from recycling. I hope that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) will return to the subject of the motion on the Order Paper, recycling.

Mr. Dalyell: Yes, with the thought that the Ukraine is now the third biggest nuclear power in the world and Kazakhstan the fourth. I mean not to insult the Kazakhs, but I wonder who in Kazakhstan is technically competent to carry out maintenance. And when one thinks about Kirgiziya and Tadzhikistan, the mind begins to boggle. Unless something is done, following the visit of Professor Stewart, the Government's chief scientific adviser, and others to the Soviet Union, I dread to think of the kind of accidents that could occur from deteriorating trigger mechanisms, and in particular the problems associated with beryllium.

The House has been very patient with me, but may I refer to one more issue. Recently the Minister visited Brazil. After talking to people in the Brazilian embassy and to Brazilian industrialists, I understand that there is one city in the world that is working remarkably well on the basis of the environment and recycling; I suspect that the hon. Member for Gravesham knows it. I refer to Curitibha. The fact is that Jaime Lermer, the long-standing and re-elected mayor of Curitibha, which lies between Sao Paulo and the Argentine border in the south and which has a fairly good climate for it, has produced a city that is based on the ideas that we have been talking about this morning. Everything is done on a strict, regimented recycling basis.

It is easy, perhaps, to impose that on a relatively new city and it is also possible to have too many regulations, but since New Zealand and Australia are looking at it, my question is whether we have anything to learn from the kind of ideas that have been produced in this remarkable experiment. I am told by a number of people that this is an extremely interesting set of ideas. Just as south America can learn from us in many matters, so I think that we may be able to learn something from it. I interpret the attitude of the hon. Member for Gravesham as indicating assent to this proposition, so I suppose that I am asking the Minister: how about going back to Brazil? I am sure that he would enjoy it.

11.6 am

Ms. Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I congratulate the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) on his excellent speech and on having given us the opportunity to talk about recycling. The Minister is aware that we recycle less waste than any other European country, apart from Ireland and Greece. Although local authorities, community groups and the population as a whole are enthusiastic about recycling, the Government do not seem to be quite so enthusiastic. Among European Community countries, only Italy recycles less paper and cardboard than the United Kingdom. Britain recycles less glass than every other EC country, except Ireland and Greece. We recycle only 21 per cent. of consumption, compared with the 66 per cent. of consumption recycled by the Netherlands.

Britain is below Holland, Belgium and France in terms of steel recycling. We have a similar dismal record on the recycling of textiles, oils, plastics and batteries.

We landfill 90 per cent. of our waste and incinerate another 8 per cent. Both methods pose tremendous problems for the environment. With landfill, water run-off pollutes rivers and streams that are already polluted. There is also the problem of methane gas. That does not help the greenhouse effect. Many explosions throughout the country are due to methane gas.

The other major problem with landfill is that by the end of the century the present landfill sites will no longer be available; they will all have been filled. We have not thought about providing any real alternatives. We shall have nowhere to put that waste by the end of the century.

I welcome the Secretary of State for the Environment's target. It was not a pledge; I should have preferred it to be a pledge. However, he has set the target of recycling 50 per cent. of domestic waste by the turn of the century. It seems unlikely, however, that that target will be achieved. If local authorities throughout the country are not achieving that target now, it is unlikely, unless more money is provided, that they will be able to achieve it in the long term.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Lady's knowledge is probably far greater than mine, but I thought that the target was 25 per cent. by the year 2000, not 50 per cent. The Minister can no doubt intervene if I am wrong.

Ms. Lynne: I understand that the target is 50 per cent., but the Minister can correct me if I am wrong.

Mr. Maclean: If I am right, both hon. Members are right, as the target is 50 per cent. of all household waste suitable for recycling. Therefore, we could end up with a target of 25 per cent. of all waste. I stand by waiting for a correction in case I am wrong.

Ms. Lynne: I am grateful for that intervention.

School children collect waste paper for recycling. Many people collect bottles and tin cans for recycling. However, recently it has been found that the waste collected, particularly paper, is not recycled but put into landfill sites. That cannot exactly encourage people who want to protect the environment to collect paper, tin cans or bottles for recycling.

We have all been round the supermarket and picked up packaged goods, only to find when we arrive home and eventually unravel the packaging that the item in the middle is half the size of the packaging. That not only misleads the consumer, but leads to a great deal of waste. In Holland, the top recycling nation in Europe, industries have been persuaded to cut packaging by 10 per cent. by the turn of the century. I hope that the President of the Board of Trade will ask our industries to meet that target. I should also like the Minister to address the issue of compulsory packaging. Often, when we go into shops, we are not allowed to leave, even though we have paid for the goods, without putting our purchases in a carrier bag. Shoppers who go into Virgin Records have to put their purchases into a bag provided by the store, even if they have a perfectly good bag. I know that that policy is an attempt to prevent shoplifting, but I think that someone like Richard Branson should be able to come up with an excellent idea to resolve the problem.

I make a plea for increasing the number of reusable bottles as that is one way to cut down recycling. There should be far more Government and local authority initiatives. If local authorities are to continue with their initiatives, they must have the necessary finance. Adur council, which is controlled by the Liberal Democrats, has kerbside collections throughout the district, which cut down on the number of cars travelling to the recycling plants. I recommend that policy to any local authority. Adur council has a tremendous record on recycling. All local authorities, whatever their complexion—Labour, Conservative or Liberal Democrat—will face financial problems when attempting to meet recycling targets unless they receive funds from Government.

Friends of the Earth conducted a survey of all local councils not long ago. They approached councils of different complexions and received several responses. One council stated:

> "Recycling will be more effective if central government creates the right climate through legislation and investment/incentives."

Another local council replied:

> "It would appear that the Government strategy is to rely on local authorities carrying out the work, resulting in poll tax payers bearing the costs in order to protect the environment."

The third local council replied:

> "Kerbside collections are not commercially viable until money up-front from central Government is provided."

It is absolutely necessary for the Government to take account of those financial problems as otherwise local authorities will be unable to meet their commitments.

My local authority, Rochdale, recently changed control. The Labour party lost control and the council is now run by Liberal Democrats and Conservatives working together. The council has proposed some good initiatives, but without the finance to pay for the initiatives, they will fail. In the long term, recycling initiatives such as kerbside collections could be self-funded, but the initial capital outlay is tremendous. Without the initial outlay, we shall be unable to go ahead with the kerbside collections. In fact, in the long term that policy could not only be self-funded, but make a slight profit. Therefore, it is cost-effective to give money to local authorities to set up such schemes.

Most of my constituents feel that recycling is a good investment. I am sorry to say that I do not think that the Government have that sort of commitment. One person closely associated with the Government is the head of the materials recovery division at the Government's Warren Spring research laboratory, John Barton. In April of last year he said that £200 million a year needed to be spent to meet the Government's recycling targets. The Government currently provide barely a quarter of that, and expect local councils to find the rest. Mr. Barton also said:

> "The cash costs ... are likely to inhibit widespread adoption of high recovery schemes if local authorities are expected to shoulder the full burden alone."

That is a civil servant's way of diplomatically stating that the Government's lack of policy on recycling is, literally, a load of rubbish.

The Government are only willing to pay lip service to the need for cash for recycling. They talk big about the benefits of recycling, but end up merely recycling their own rhetoric.

11.18 am

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) and share the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend the

[Mr. Andrew Miller]

Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) about the wisdom of the electorate of Blaby in not recycling the previous Member of Parliament in new and more expensive packaging.

I shall concentrate on the issues pertinent to the subject of polyethylene recycling, which is important to the nation as a whole and, in particular, to my constituency, which contains a large Shell complex. I shall correct the Department of the Environment officials on their liberal use of geographical terminology in Environment questions earlier this week. In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), it was stated that the Shell plant had moved to Runcorn, which is in the next-but-one constituency of Halton. The constituency of the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office—the hon. Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad)—falls in between. I am sure that the Department of the Environment will recognise that geography is important in an area north of Watford where there is a high potential risk.

I draw the attention of the House to a valuable paper entitled "Polyethylene—The 1990s and Beyond", presented by Mr. J. A. Collins, chairman and chief executive of Shell UK. It was presented at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre on 19 and 20 May this year. It is an especially important and thoughtful paper, and I congratulate Shell on its contributions to the subject. Shell is sometimes criticised—for example, during Environment questions earlier this week—and I have been party to that criticism, for those of its activities that affect the environment, but sometimes it takes positive action.

The paper deals with polyethylene waste and states that it has as much to do with the problems of presentation as with the realities. I am sure that hon. Members will understand that to a certain extent, because we are all becoming increasingly frustrated with the amount of polyethylene waste left lying around outside the local McDonald's or fish-and-chip shop in our constituencies.

The paper argues that society cannot turn back the clock and that there are a number of respects in which polyethylene waste is extremely important. The hon. Member for Blaby mentioned food packaging. Certainly, some supermarket companies misuse or abuse packaging, especially polyethylene packaging. However, there are occasions when it is necessary to use such materials—for example, to keep foods fresh and hygienic. There is an increasing use of polyethylenes in rural areas to protect crops from pests and the cold. In some farming communities such materials are used wisely, but in others they are abused and left to deteriorate most unpleasantly on the edge of farmland.

Polyethylenes have become a vital part of society—for example, in medicine, in the motor vehicle industry and for household appliances—but an enormous amount could realistically be recycled if we put our minds to it. The paper states:

"Only 7 per cent. of . . . domestic waste is made up of plastics".

If one looks around our streets, towns and waste disposal tips, it appears that the volume is much greater.

We face an enormous problem, which has a bearing on oil production. The large volume of waste leads to the assumption that there is a misuse of manufactured oil. I concur with Mr. Collins that

"the manufacture of polyethylene uses up only about 1 per cent. of the total oil production, and only 4 per cent. is used for plastics generally, and 7 per cent. for all petrochemicals. The rest is . . . burned—mostly for transport, heating or power. Even then, the energy . . . of plastics is not lost".

We have the means to reuse plastics but the challenge is to maintain the eco-balance at the same time. It is possible to meet the challenge and to reuse plastics more positively.

An alternative is landfill, which means losing the product for ever. I am sure that all hon. Members have experienced the difficulty in their constituencies of people rightly and understandably not wanting landfill sites in their own backyard. If the Minister disagrees with me, I shall be happy for the Gowy landfill site in my constituency to be moved to his, but I am sure that he agrees that we all face the same problem. Many materials are unnecessarily lost for ever in landfill sites.

Another option with plastics involves energy recovery and is of questionable advantage because plastics are notoriously difficult to burn. Again, many of us have experienced the problem of waste incineration. My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) mentioned the difficulties of disposal and of energy recovery from waste materials. Much can be done to improve the technologies involved. Experiments have begun to prove that economically viable recovery is possible, but that is still very much at the experimental stage.

That leads us to the question whether polyethylenes can be recycled. The first challenge is economics, which the hon. Member for Blaby mentioned: he talked about the role of retailers in that part of the equation. The matter is much more complex than that. Mr. Collins's paper states:

"The cyclical nature of the petrochemical industry results in huge swings in prices"

of oil, which could render the economics of recycling plastics, and polyethylene in particular, not viable in certain parts of the cycle. That is the challenge facing the Government. It is not reasonable to expect local authorities and companies engaged in recycling to shoulder permanently the responsibility that should rightly fall on the Government.

There is also a problem of quality. Recycled plastics and especially polyethylenes, the organic chemistry of which is beyond my rather rusty chemical knowledge, are an enormous problem. We must face fairly and squarely the issues of research and development which are a challenge to the Government. Last week I sat through our very well-informed debate on science and technology and was proud to participate in it. There was consensus among hon. Members of all parties about the need for greater commitment to support British research and development. Against that background, plastics, and their recycling, are especially important.

For a number of years, the companies involved in the manufacture of polyethylene have sought more imaginative uses for plastics. But when, for cyclical reasons, economics make recycling an unattractive proposition, it is clear that the companies will need direct support and encouragement from Government and local authorities.

There is a problem of the marketplace. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow referred to his activities almost 20 years ago in the House on the question of the recycling of vehicle components. It is only over the past few months that companies such as BMW have tried to use recyclability as a marketing tool. A number of companies operating within our shores, especially the Vauxhall plant

owned by General Motors in my constituency, are taking great strides in considering the possibility of the greater use of plastics which would make cars lighter and cut energy consumption during the life cycle of a car. There are some positive developments. However, because of the question of the quality of recycled plastics, the possibility of having, for example, an old bumper recycled into a new bumper for the next model of car raises interesting technical problems and presents a serious challenge to the industry.

Is it right that we should simply allow the marketplace to dictate that something that is environmentally sensible and of benefit to the whole nation should be left to the vehicle manufacturers and the polyethylene manufacturers? Should the Government take a lead role in the encouragement and pursuance of the necessary research and development to bring about such changes? The House will agree that there is a positive role for the Government in this matter.

It is up to us as Members of Parliament to take the lead. We could follow the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow about the way in which we conduct ourselves here. My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish made interesting comments about the way in which *Hansard* is produced. Perhaps we could be more efficient in the use of paper, which would be a positive help. We should give the lead to the nation and the Government should give direct support to the nation.

Comments were made earlier about the importation of toxic waste which, as the Minister knows, is a matter dear to my heart. I was pleased by a letter I received from the Secretary of State for the Environment a few days ago which has at least given a breathing space—I hope that hon. Members will excuse the pun—to my constituents who are concerned about the burning in my constituency of polycholorinated biphenyls or PCBs imported from Australia.

We have a long way to go. We can make positive steps, but the House must give the lead. If we do not, it will not be possible for the major manufacturing companies to contribute fully to the necessary changes. It is a matter that we cannot leave to the free market.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Blaby on raising the matter on the Floor of the House. I agree with the final words of his motion:

"further initiatives are required to encourage the use of reusable and returnable bottles and containers."

I extend that remark to the comments made about polyethylenes. It is an important area and a challenge to us all which extends well beyond the question of containers. We must consider motor vehicles and everything around us, including white goods. If the Government are prepared to pick up that challenge positively, to intervene in the marketplace and to ensure that the necessary support is given to research and development to encourage companies to work in a positive way, I am sure that they will receive support from the Opposition.

11.34 am

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean): Ministers sometimes find themselves in privileged positions. I am not referring to the remarks by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) who said that he hoped that I would soon have a chance to go back to Rio. Although I was privileged to take part in the discussions on the Earth summit, after 12 days in a temperature of 100 deg. and inside a building all the time —I did not get a tan—I found it rather nice to come back to the delights of Penrith and The Border, and the Lake district, which have a lot to offer.

The privilege to which I refer is that a couple of weeks ago, I took part in an Adjournment debate. I had the privilege to reply to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger), who made his maiden speech in that debate. I am fortunate today in having the chance to make a few remarks and in having had the chance to listen to my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) making an outstanding maiden speech. I congratulate him on that.

Many of us had great affection for the hon. Gentleman's predecessor. Without fear of contradiction, I can say that all Conservative Members had great respect for Nigel Lawson's abilities in his various governmental jobs. I know that my hon. Friend will make an excellent successor to Lord Lawson. He is a smaller version of Lord Lawson, but an infinitely potent version. I look forward to hearing more contributions from him in the House.

I give my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby one caution. On looking through "Vacher's", I saw that the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) lists eating cream cakes as one of her hobbies. She described her disappointment that, having taken off all the wrapping, she was left with a tiny cake at the bottom. My hon. Friend the Member for Blaby lists as his hobbies, mountaineering, walking and other energetic country sports. I hope that the two sets of hobbies do not cross. If they do, my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby will end up looking like Lord Lawson.

I am rather concerned by some of the comments by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). For two days in succession, he has challenged me on issues on which I am slightly sticky. Two days ago, he asked me which washing-up liquid I used and today he asked me whether, when I went to buy a lady's blouse, I noticed a difference between how a blouse was packaged and how a shirt was packaged. Again, I checked in "Vacher's" and I found that the hon. Gentleman is married with three children. I assume, therefore, that he knows, as most sensible married northerners know, that decisions on what washing-up liquid to use are best left by males in the household to others to decide. Although I always have the last word, it is usually "Yes, dear", and I happily obey orders. I offer that advice to the hon. Gentleman as being best for a happy marriage.

Mr. Tony Banks: That is a terribly sexist remark. The Minister has great environmental responsibilities. Surely there is some discussion in the household with his partner about environmentally friendly products. It is not a question of allowing his partner to do the shopping. Surely there is some discussion about the brands of merchandise coming into the family home. I am not interested in whether the Minister cross-dresses or whether he likes ladies blouses. However, he should show some concern about products in the home.

Mr. Maclean: I show greater concern for noise pollution and for the general peace and quite of the Eden valley which would not be as peaceful as it is at the moment if I were to attempt to take the big decisions about which products are bought for the home. I content myself with dealing with the minor issues such as the Earth

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summit and saving the planet. I would not dream of trespassing on the issues for which my wife is largely responsible.

Mr. Bennett: I accept that the Minister does not like getting involved with buying blouses and that he may get his wife to buy his shirts for him. However, I challenge him to unpack at the Dispatch Box the shirt that I am holding because that would demonstrate the amount of waste paper involved. Or does the Minister get his wife to unpack his shirts for him as well?

Mr. Maclean *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Perhaps the Minister can discuss how his wife recycles the packaging, because the motion is about recycling.

Mr. Maclean: I shall have to decline the challenge by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish, particularly at the Dispatch Box.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish raised an interesting point about *Hansard* which I will pass on to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. Hon. Members sometimes wish, and not necessarily for vain reasons, to have a look through *Hansard* to read what was said. Even if we want to look only at one parliamentary answer or one brilliant intervention from a sedentary position—something with which the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) may be familiar—one nevertheless acquires the whole *Hansard*. Very seldom is *Hansard* recycled and handed on to other hon. Members. I shall pass on to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House the suggestion that it might be possible to provide shorter extracts from *Hansard* to satisfy most purposes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blaby raised some very important points. He referred to the use of sewage sludge and what in the United States is called envirosoil. A lot can be done on composting. Much can be done in converting sewage sludge and other materials into usable soils and we should like to do all that we can to encourage that.

As the Government have banned straw burning, it may be possible for industry with surplus straw to come together with those producing surplus sewage sludge. It may therefore be theoretically possible to produce a rather good material which, in the old days out in the country, we used to call manure. No doubt there is a modern scientific term for that wonderful new material. However, I do not want to give the impression that everything can be composted. For the foreseeable future, a large amount may still have to be incinerated or put into landfill sites.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blaby also referred to excessive packaging, a point which was also referred to by several Opposition Members. My hon. Friend urged us to push on with the EC draft directive on packaging waste. As my hon. Friend featured the point largely in his speech, it is worth while for me to give the United Kingdom position on the waste directive.

The text is still an outline proposal for a draft directive and we do not yet have a formal position on it. However, we welcome the intention to harmonise measures taken by member states and to reduce the impact of packaging waste on the environment. The Government will observe the following principles in their discussions on the proposed directive. First, the principle of harmonisation is essential to prevent proposals such as the German packaging decree from imposing anti-competitive requirements and raising possible barriers to trade. We want harmonisation.

Secondly, the waste hierarchy set down in the recently revised waste framework directive, which gives equal value to materials and energy recovery, should be adhered to. The draft generally achieves that, but it is still not entirely clear in respect of energy recovery.

Thirdly, member states should be able to choose their own balance between the various minimisation measures for waste avoidance, the reuse of materials and energy recovery to suit their own environmental and economic circumstances.

Fourthly, the Government have no objection in principle to the use of economic instruments such as packaging levy. However, in that context, that gives rise to questions about the EC's role in fiscal policy. That will need very careful consideration.

Fifthly, there should be no excessive statistical demands and burdens on Governments or industry. I hope that my statement of the principles that we will follow is of use to my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby and to other hon. Members.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blaby also spoke with some considerable passion about reusable containers and returnables. The hon. Members for Rochdale and for Denton and Reddish also referred to that. Where possible, reusable containers have an important role to play. We are considering the costs involved and a study has been undertaken. At this stage, I can only say that we must not get completely hooked on the idea that everything can be reusable or in returnable containers. There could be greater environmental costs in some circumstances. For example, although it is right to defend the doorstep delivery, because many people quite rightly want it to continue, there is a tremendous energy cost involved in cleaning and sterilising bottles in the dairy industry.

As we have higher standards and the public expect less contamination and as our legal liability increases all the time, so food companies and fizzy drinks companies will be under an obligation to ensure that their containers are as clean and sterile as possible. That could involve a very high cost. There is also the cost of carting bottles around different suppliers to return each individual's bottles.

Although I can see scope for a further increase in reusable containers, we should not get hooked on the idea that that is the only good thing. In some cases, recycling could be environmentally better than returnables.

Mr. Win Griffiths: The Minister has raised a very interesting point about the possible dangers of reusing containers for food and milk. Can the Minister tell us what information the Department of the Environment or any other Department has about the number of cases of food poisoning which have arisen through the use of unsatisfactorily cleansed reusable containers?

Mr. Maclean: No, I cannot largely because containers are not reusable. I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman what would happen if everyone used reusables. *[Interruption.]* We must not get hooked on the idea or carried away with it. I am not pooh-poohing it. I am simply urging a little caution in that it might not be the panacea that all hon. Members seem to believe that it is. However, it is certainly worth exploring further.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclean: No, I want to consider the points made by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

Mr. Dalyell: Before the Minister does that, will he answer the question asked by the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) and repeated by me? Are the Government considering seriously what the Danes are doing? If it is true that a bottle can be used 33 times, surely we should consider that because that is a remarkable statistic. Are the Government considering the Danish experience?

Mr. Maclean: We have commissioned a study into reusables, but we do not have its conclusions yet. I cannot therefore advise the hon. Gentleman. However, of course we are interested in all studies on reusables and recycling. There are many lessons to be learned from around the world, and other countries have lessons to learn from our experience as well.

Mr. Tony Banks: We do not have to keep on reinventing the wheel. I am somewhat older than the Minister. I can remember that in my entrepreneurial days before I saw the light and joined the Labour party, I used to get quite a lot of additional money from taking the lemonade bottles and the beer bottles back to the off-licence because there was quite an income to be earned. We used to reuse an awful lot more of our vessels for liquids, in particular, than we do now. Why do we not look at what we did in the past? Very few bottles these days come with a deposit to enable youngsters or aspiring young entrepreneurs like myself to go and earn a few coppers.

Mr. Maclean: It is interesting to hear the hon. Gentleman's confession that the Labour party is now anti-entreprenurial. The hon. Gentleman is a superb example. No one is trying to reinvent the wheel—perhaps some scientists are; it is a dangerous thing to suggest. Of course there are studies which we shall consider, and there are lessons to be learned from past behaviour.

The volume of drinks these days is far in excess of what it was 20 or 30 years ago. Supermarket shelves are absolutely packed—mile after mile of bottles. I am merely asking the House to consider whether, if all those bottles, from the individual portions to the three-litre plastic bottles of Coke, lemonade or water, were made of glass and were returnable, there would actually be an energy saving. Would there be little kids on bikes, pedalling around with those bottles? How much energy would we burn in collecting them, returning them to the right distributors, cleaning them and refilling them? That might be cheaper and there might be environmental benefits, but let us not assume automatically that all returnables are cheaper than plastic bottles which go for recycling, destruction and reuse.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow made a characteristically detailed and fascinating speech. In Rio, we spent much time in the working groups discussing soil degradation. It perhaps was not called soil degradation—but when we talked about trying to obtain a convention on forests and on deserts, the purpose was to prevent soil degradation. The hon. Gentleman knows that we have a statement of principles on the world's forests and we shall also work further on desertification. In both matters, consideration will be given to preventing further soil degradation and soil loss. I am not sure where composting comes into the equation, but measures will certainly be considered which retain cover on soils to prevent them from being eroded or washed away.

Mr. Dalyell: The remarkable edition of the *Observer* gives the figure. Land covered with trees and other plants absorbs 20 times more rain water than bare earth. The *Observer* researched that as a general statistic, and it is very important. I should like to say amen to what the Minister said.

Mr. Maclean: I do not know whether the figure is right, but I presume that it is. Certainly, the more progress that we can make on getting the principles on forestry into a binding convention over the next few years, the more pleased the British Government will be, but we have a good starting point. Like everything at Rio, we have started an unstoppable process rolling. Some of the sceptics and cynics said that they were disappointed before we even went to Rio. There are always some who will say that we did not achieve enough, but they fail to realise that we have started the process. Just like the Montreal protocols, which were tightened up, so the whole Rio process, I envisage, will be tightened up as well.

On design for recycling, the hon. Gentleman has a very good point. Groups have already been established in respect of used cars and electronic equipment to ensure that producers take account of their responsibility for their products' ultimate fate, including designing for recycling.

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment met representatives of the car industry recently and invited them to respond by next month with proposals to increase recycling. About 75 per cent. of the material in cars is now recycled. The United Kingdom Government are also taking part in discussions at European level to address those issues.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow also asked about new money for Rio. When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister spoke at the Earth summit in Rio on 12 June, he called for a replenishment of the GEF—the global environment facility—of about $2 billion to $3 billion, primarily to help developing countries to implement the conventions. Britain's share, of course, will depend on the final size of the replenishment and the arrangements for sharing the burden among donors, but it will be up to £100 million, and that is new money from this country and it is separate, of course, from the aid programme.

We now have in place in this country the most comprehensive framework ever for recycling. The Government's basic policy was set out in the environment White Paper, "This Common Inheritance", in 1990. We said we wanted to

"encourage the minimisation of waste; promote the recycling of as much waste as possible—including the recovery of materials and energy; tighten controls over waste disposal standards."

It is important to recognise that recycling is only one option and it might not always be the right one. Where we can eliminate waste altogether, that is clearly preferable. Some materials could be recycled only at exorbitant cost in terms of both money and energy use, so burning waste to recover energy will sometimes be the best choice. Landfill continues to be a valid environmental option.

We must always aim to make those decisions on good economic and environmental grounds. We should be

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careful not to view recycling as an end in itself, although, of course it is very important, and that is what I shall concentrate on.

To take the White Paper policy forward, we set a target of recycling, through materials recovery and composting, half of the recyclable portion of household waste by the year 2000. That is about 25 per cent. of all household waste. The Government recognises that reaching that challenging target, considering the starting point we are at, cannot be the responsibility of just a few people. Central Government, local authorities, industry, voluntary organisations and the general public all have a role to play, because recycling is not just the collection but the processing of materials. This is why my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry share responsibility for recycling policy. Together, we have been working hard to promote recycling in all those sectors.

Local authorities are responsible for collecting and disposing of household waste, so it is only natural that a great many have taken an interest in recycling and that some are in the vanguard of the large-scale recycling of domestic waste in this country. My Department and the Department of Trade and Industry are helping to fund pilots of various recycling schemes which will provide valuable information about their effectiveness and the costs involved. I visited Milton Keynes on 18 May and I saw evidence of the progress made by that authority. There is now separate collection of recyclables throughout the borough, and about 150 tonnes are collected weekly.

However, despite the lead given by some local authorities and the interest shown by many, the situation is still rather patchy throughout the United Kingdom. One enthusiastic council may be surrounded by others which are not doing nearly as much. That can only make things more difficult, both for the council and for the merchants with whom it deals. Perhaps an authority's waste department might be responsible for materials recycling while the parks department is interested in composting, but sometimes there is very little interaction between the two. It is partly for these reasons that section 49 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 places a duty on all waste collection authorities to draw up a recycling plan. This will mean that from now on recycling will occupy its proper place in authorities' waste strategies. All authorities will need to take a comprehensive look at the options and opportunities that recycling offers. We have encouraged councils to discuss their plans with their neighbours. They must draw them up by 1 August this year.

Mr. Tony Banks: That initiative is well known and welcome. However, it is all very well to pass the problem on to the local authorities. Perhaps the Minister can correct me, but no recycling scheme of which I am aware makes a profit. The Adur scheme in West Sussex is perhaps the best, but it does not make money. None of the schemes can make money. Does the Minister know of one local authority recycling scheme which makes money? What resources will he make available to the local authorities?

Mr. Maclean: I shall come to that in a moment. We provide financial help through supplementary credit approvals, but, of course, disposal of waste costs money at present. If anyone can dispose of waste and make a profit from doing so, I should like to see it. Of course, recycling schemes cost money.

Mr. Tony Banks: They cost more money.

Mr. Maclean: Yes. They can cost more money than sticking waste in a hole in the ground. However, the Government are considering the funding of such schemes through our supplementary credit approvals. I have just allocated several million pounds for those purposes. As the hon. Gentleman says, all recycling schemes need to be funded. Ideally, schemes should be financially self supporting, but the Government recognise that that will not always be so—at least not in the early stages before schemes are up and running and collect sufficient quantities and before there are sufficient takers of the stuff to make recycling worth while.

We have been running our programme of supplementary credit approvals for recycling since 1991-92. They allow authorities to borrow more to finance the capital costs of setting up schemes—and have the added advantage of feeding through into the level of the council's standard spending assessment.

These SCAs have proved to be very popular; in both years of the programme so far we have been about 100 per cent. over-subscribed. In 1991-92, £12 million was allocated to 96 authorities and in 1992-93 we have just allocated £15 million to 126 authorities. In all, more than 400 recycling schemes have benefited, ranging from large-scale materials recovery facilities to household composting and chlorofluorocarbon recovery schemes.

The Government have also introduced measures that will make the arithmetic more favourable for recycling schemes once they are up and running. These are the recycling credits, introduced in section 52 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990—an example of using economic instruments to help the environment. I think that the House will welcome that.

Recycling credits are a simple concept and work as follows: when materials are taken out of the waste stream to be recycled, a disposal authority has less waste to dispose of and should make savings in its disposal costs. The credits pass on the savings to whoever is responsible for reclaiming those materials, whether it is another local authority or, perhaps, a charity.

The size of credits will vary around the country with the level of disposal costs, but in this, their first year, we reckon that they will range between £4 and £20 a tonne. They should therefore make a valuable contribution to the economic viability of recycling.

Ms. Lynne: The scheme that the Minister describes is excellent. However, there is still no commitment on the capital outlay made by local authorities. When will the Minister pledge money for capital outlay? He spoke about the various schemes, borrowing facilities and other worthy schemes. However, unless local authorities are given help with capital outlay they will not meet their recycling targets.

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Lady is unduly pessimistic. The supplementary credit approvals that we have granted will allow local authorities to set up the recycling schemes which are best suited to their needs. We monitor the position carefully. Pilot schemes are up and running and

are being monitored. I believe that they will turn out to be successful. If there are lessons to be learnt, we shall, of course, learn them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blaby spoke strongly in favour of the greater use of reusable and refillable packaging. Last year the Government commissioned a report into deposit and refund systems which showed that high recovery rates would be possible, but which also made it clear that such systems would involve significant costs. I assure my hon. Friend that the Government will examine carefully the conclusions of both that study and the economic instruments study so that we can assess properly whether further action is necessary to encourage recycling and, if so, what that action should be.

My hon. Friend also mentioned landfill. We are investigating whether the costs of waste disposal take into account all the environmental consequences of landfill. If they do not, disposal costs are artificially low and recycling schemes are being placed at a disadvantage. I thank my hon. Friend for mentioning the matter and drawing it to my attention.

No amount of work on recycling would be complete without taking into account the role of industry. Scrap merchants were using the rallying cry, "Where there's muck there's brass" long before the rest of us were giving much thought to recycling. Industry's participation is still essential; with people everywhere enthusiastically embracing recycling, it is only because industry has developed the technology to use recycled material that we can put the consumers' wishes into practice.

That is not to say that there is no more to be done. All companies, whether or not they are part of the recycling industry, have a part to play. All companies should consider whether their goods are recyclable or could be made more easily so. They should explore the scope for using more recycled products as raw materials on the production line. This is essential if there are to be growing markets for the materials that people take to the bottle bank or put out for separate collection. It also makes good commercial sense as environmental issues increasingly influence what people buy.

The Government have pressed various sectors of industry to take up their full responsibilities. We are also grateful for the active work of the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment on a number of issues, such as glass and paper.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclean: If the hon. Gentleman does not mind, I shall push on. I know that many other hon. Members wish to speak.

Mr. Dalyell: This will be my last point. What would be the Government's reaction to an industry which had been approached by a third-world country to recycle hazardous waste but found that it would be difficult economically, even though the industry was sufficiently technically advanced to do it? It is the problem of toxic colonialism. What help would such industry receive from the British Government to receive materials which developing countries found difficult to recycle? Would it receive any help? Do the Government have a responsibility in that crucial matter?

Mr. Maclean: Like other European Community Governments, the United Kingdom Government wish to sign the Basle convention. We want it to be ratified. There is no question of its being diluted. It is regrettable that we did not reach agreement at the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 26 May, at which the French expressed concern about self-sufficiency. We are also anxious about self-sufficiency, but we felt that a form of words could be found that would satisfy us.

The position is exactly the same as that set out in a letter from Lord Strathclyde to the hon. Member for Linlithgow. The Government take the view that developed countries, especially in Europe, should be self sufficient and should not take in each other's waste for final disposal. That should not be necessary. However, it is appropriate for developed countries to take in waste from developing countries, with all the appropriate safeguards on movement and documentation, if developing countries do not have the technological expertise for recycling, recovery and disposal. I hope that that is satisfactory to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Dalyell: Would a firm be helped in carrying out that policy? That is the crux of the issue. Would Rechem or any other recycling company expect any help from the British Government to take on recycling that was uneconomic?

Mr. Bennett: No.

Mr. Dalyell: I fear that the answer is no.

Mr. Maclean: We have no grant system to pay companies to take in someone else's waste. I have no recollection of any demands of that nature. Industry wants certainty about the international rules. We want the Basle convention to be ratified and signed so that all countries know their obligations. Industry will then be able to deal successfully with toxic and dangerous wastes. Provided that the international rules are fully agreed. I hope that we shall be able to do that in the European Community as soon as possible.

I want to conclude, because other hon. Members are keen to speak in this and the next debate. We have been discussing with the packaging industry ways of eliminating unnecessary packaging and reducing the amount of packaging that is thrown away. We have made it clear that if the industry does not produce substantive proposals, we are prepared to take action. As a response, the British Retail Consortium recently issued guidance on retail packaging to its members and their suppliers. I also understand that the packaging industry will be announcing next week an initiative to deal with complaints about over-packaging.

In addition, following discussions with the Government, the Newspaper Publishers' Association has set itself the target of increasing the proportion of recycled fibre in newsprint to at least 40 per cent. by the year 2000, compared with 26·8 per cent. in 1990. Some of us would urge them to start with the quantity produced in the Sunday papers.

However, the Government's strategy involves carrots as well. We propose to offer, subject to EC and parliamentary approval, £20 million to paper manufacturers SCA, throughout the DTI's scheme of assistance for exceptional projects. That would contribute to the capital costs of a large new recycled newsprint mill at Aylesford in Kent. The mill would provide a market for 350,000 tonnes of old newspapers and magazines a year.

[Mr. Maclean]

Grants totalling £3·5 million have also been made to industry under ETIS—environmental innovation scheme —DEMOS—demonstration of environmental management options scheme—and Euroenviron operated by my Department and the DTI. They are funding research and the demonstration of various innovations in, for example, plastic and rubber recycling and ways of overcoming the market imbalance in the United Kingdom between glass cullet recovered—more than 50 per cent. of it green—and production, which is 70 per cent. clear.

I was interested in the comment by my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby that we should encourage industry to make better use of green glass. In our discussions with industry—especially the food industry—we shall mention that, to find out whether more imaginative use can be made of green glass or whether less can be used in the first place.

The work of local authorities and industry would not be as effective if it were not for the enthusiasm of ordinary people in the country. It is their enthusiasm that fires the activities of many voluntary groups, whether or not their organisations are overtly environmental. The Government recognise the value of employing their zeal, which is why during the past two years we have given £0·25 million to recycling groups through the environmental grant fund.

Nevertheless, with the growth of comprehensive local authority collection schemes, this is the right time for voluntary bodies to be assessing their role. In some cases the traditional role of collecting recyclables may no longer be the most effective use of energy. Perhaps those energies could be channelled into fund raising for recycling equipment or the Adopt-a-Bank schemes which some authorities are operating. My Department will be discussing these issues with voluntary organisations during the next few months.

I am sure that we all want to see a sustained growth in recycling in this country, but to achieve it, we must all play our part; we cannot sit back while other people do it all. We should all be aware of what opportunities for recycling there are where we live and work, and make use of them. Similarly, recycling depends on having a market for the materials in the first place; we can all help by buying recycled goods where possible. For example, recycled writing paper is available in the House and I would urge all right hon. and hon. Members to use it.

Certainly my Department is taking its responsibilities seriously—230 tonnes of waste paper have been collected since the Department started its recycling scheme in October 1990. There are also can banks and bottle banks in the Department's buildings and we are hoping to introduce a plastics recycling scheme soon.

Apart from this example, the Government have, as I have said, built a comprehensive framework for recycling in this country and are continuing to work hard to increase recycling. I am confident that in eight years' time, in the year 2000, we will have successfully reached our target of recycling 25 per cent. of household waste, and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby again on an excellent maiden speech and on choosing this important subject as his topic.

12.14 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I join the Minister in congratulating and thanking the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) for giving us the opportunity early in this Parliament to discuss recycling. As the Minister and many other hon. Members have commented, the Government have set themselves some demanding targets and it was appropriate for the hon. Member for Blaby to highlight the need for further Government action to ensure that the targets are met. I found his speech elegant, concise and well informed. I seek to differ with him on only one matter, and that is his false optimism in confidently expecting the Government to do everything required to meet the demands of their recycling targets before the end of the century.

My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) rightly said that despite the excellent target that the Government have set themselves, their record is not good. Less than 3 per cent. of all domestic waste is recycled, and unless the Government go into overdrive they are not likely to achieve their targets. As the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) said, they are merely targets and are not a pledge. It would have been nice if the Minister had said that they were now more than targets and that the Government pledged to reach them by the end of the century.

My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish stressed the way in which the packaging industry is still light years behind reductions in packaging which are feasible—I was going to say that it was in the stone age, but that would be inappropriate. He also said that the Government must intervene in the market if recycling is to be effective and he placed a question mark over the long-term role of burning refuse and energy recovery from refuse as a means of recycling household waste. Energy recovery through incineration is part of a first-generation solution, but such generation from household waste will be better achieved through biogas projects such as the major project in Denmark and Adur council's minor scheme, using tiger worms and other options which I shall return to.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) made a wide-ranging and well-informed contribution on issues related to recycling. Whatever length of time my hon. Friend speaks, it is always too short for me because his contributions are always so well researched. Every few minutes he introduces something new to the arena and makes the debate even more well informed. His speech today was particularly wide ranging. He fixed on the Rio summit and pointed out that recycling was not simply a matter for Britain and our local authority processes for dealing with waste matter, but was a worldwide problem to which we could make contribution. He further pointed out that we should be concerned not just with household recycling but with saving the earth of the planet.

My hon. friend rightly spent some time on the issue of toxic waste, on which we need to take urgent action. He mentioned the Curitiba initiative in Brazil. It would be well worth exploring further the recycling city there.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) rightly, given the important part it plays in his constituency, referred to Shell. It is often criticised for the negative aspects of its activities in terms of the pollution of our environment. He pointed out how

it is considering positively all the issues involved in the recycling of plastics and polyethylene in particular. It was encouraging to hear from him of the work that Shell is doing. Indeed, it was encouraging to hear his comment on the way in which General Motors, in its Vauxhall guise in this country, was taking seriously the problems of making cars easily recyclable.

Early in his speech the Minister referred to composting. I was wondering at what point to refer to that issue and as the Minister, having got over one or two problems to do with his domestic arrangements, virtually led on the subject, I shall consider it now. I have been discussing with several people involved in local authority schemes, in particular Milton Keynes, the recycling of those parts of household waste that can well be used for composting. They have pointed out to me that, apart from some regulations on heavy metal content, not much is said about the nature of compostable and composted material. The hon. Member for Blaby referred to the United States experience with envirosoil. He said that, although the United States Environmental Protection Agency had approved the product, the European Community foresaw problems with the heavy metal present in our sewage sludge.

Milton Keynes council warned me of the possibility of human, animal and plant pathogens causing serious problems. I was told that we need urgently to set standards for acceptable composted material and that then there could be an immense step forward in terms of the volume of household waste that could be safely and valuably put to good use as recycled material.

I know, for example, that Wessex Water, with one of its subsidiary companies, has produced a sewage sludge-derived composting material which is undergoing trial tests at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I am not sure whether it is MAFF or the Department of the Environment that will eventually declare it as a satisfactory and safe product. I do not know whether the Minister knows anything about that, but it seems that a useful step forward could be taken if those standards were laid down, if we had compost derived from sewage sludge and if household waste that is normally picked up by local authorities were used.

Waste Watch is doing a creditable job trying to raise awareness about the need for recycling and to encourage recycling. It has put together some interesting information on recyclable materials. It points out that paper and cardboard, for example, represent 33 per cent. by weight and 38 per cent. by volume of the contents of the average dustbin. It is reckoned that everyone in Britain consumes about two or three trees' worth of paper products a year. In 1989, the total consumption of paper and board in the United Kingdom was 9·6 million tonnes, of which 6 million tonnes were imported. In that year imported paper and pulp cost us £2,500 million. If the Government would only think twice about it, they would see that, apart from being environmentally acceptable, recycling paper would be very acceptable in terms of diminishing our balance of payments deficit.

Warren Spring laboratory estimates that 6·6 million tonnes of waste paper are disposed of each year into landfill. Of the total, between 2·7 and 3·6 per cent. only is reclaimed.

I am delighted about the £20 million that the Government will put into the paper mill in Kent. I hope that no problems arise in obtaining the necessary approval. Such initiatives are an important way forward for the recycling of all materials.

Anyone who has more than a passing interest in and knowledge of the recycling business, believes that the Government must play a firm and decisive role in developing the recycling market. The Government should not fight shy of that role on the ground that it would interfere with the workings of the free market, which is so beloved by the Adam Smith Institute. The Government have already interfered in one important part of the market with the introduction of fiscal measures relating to leaded and unleaded petrol. Unfortunately, it was not an environmentally conscious desire of motor car users that led to the big expansion in the use of unleaded petrol. It simply happened because the Government decided to interfere in the market to make the use of unleaded petrol a favourable and worthwhile option.

Some plastic materials can also be recycled. About a fifth of consumer waste, by volume, comes from plastics, but only about 7 per cent. by weight. The Department of Trade and Industry recycling advisory unit at the Warren Spring laboratory estimates that up to between 60 and 70 per cent. of all domestic plastic waste could be recovered. However just 5·7 per cent. was reclaimed in 1989, and that from the industrial and commercial sectors.

Post-consumer plastic waste, which is found mainly in packaging materials, is another important area in which improvements could be made. To take a simple example, more than 400 tonnes of plastic and polystyrene vending cups are discarded in shops, offices and factories every week in Britain. As much as 35 per cent. of all plastics are used in packaging. If the plastics were recycled in new products, we could make an 80 per cent. saving in energy.

Mr. Tony Banks: My hon. Friend's argument could be driven home if this place set a much better example. It is not a question of getting at the Government; we should set an example. My hon. Friend spoke of plastic cups, but we use vast amounts of them in the Refreshment Department and that should be stopped.

I have noticed some new ingenious devices in the toilets. I thought that they were spying cameras to observe indiscretions in the gents, but they are infra-red machines that switch the lights on and off and make the loos flush only when they are used. They are good, welcome examples. Will my hon. Friend encourage the House authorities to extend the use of such environmentally friendly practices throughout this place so that we can set an example?

Mr. Griffiths: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. I wholeheartedly concur with him, but not just for the environmentally sound reasons which prompted his remarks. I absolutely hate drinking from plastic and polystyrene cups. I should like them to be banned altogether.

I was referring to the 80 per cent. energy savings that we could make from recycling plastics. Of course, we must take account of the energy costs of collecting the plastics for recycling. However, I gather that, despite them, no one has ever challenged the fact that the recycling of plastics has a plus side.

Big improvements can also be made in the recycling of cans. We in Britain use about 12 billion tin-plated steel cans each year. It is estimated that, in 1989, 1,050 million

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steel cans were recycled, less than 10 per cent. of the total. At present, 23 local authorities are recycling cans by magnet separation. There is a 75 per cent. energy saving when steel from scrap is used in the steel-making process. Even taking into account the energy cost of transport, there is a major advantage in the process.

About 2 billion aluminium cans are used in the United Kingdom each year. If they were all recycled, there would be about £13 million worth of product. In 1989, only 60 million aluminium cans, about 3 per cent., were recycled, though by 1990 the figure had improved to 11 per cent. As the hon. Member for Blaby and others pointed out, the industry has a target for recycling 50 per cent., but there is no reason why, with proper collection methods, we could not raise that to close to 100 per cent.

The savings in terms of energy and the value of the aluminium cans returned, not to mention the slowdown in resource depletion, makes that an important option. I hope that the aluminium industry, with encouragement from the Government, will set itself the target of close to 100 per cent. by the end of the century. Perhaps we should not be over-optimistic, and set a target of 95 per cent., the rate being achieved now by some countries.

About 6 billion glass containers are used every year in the United Kingdom. The average household throws out five bottles or jars each week. Each person uses 15 kg of glass a year. Glass makes up about 8 per cent. by weight of domestic refuse.

Bottle banks have existed in Britain for about 13 years. There are more than 5,000 banks, with the target for 1995 of 10,000 bottle banks. Severn and Leeds are two authorities with the most extensive bottle schemes, and they are proving extremely successful. Warren Spring laboratory estimates that 2 million tonnes of bottle were landfilled in 1989. So there is potential for doubling the amount of bottles that can be recycled, remembering that in the recycling process there is a 25 per cent. energy saving.

Some countries in Europe—for example, Holland—have one bottle bank for every 1,200 people. Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Holland and West Germany have all achieved glass recycling levels of more than 50 per cent. The European average is 33 per cent. We in Britain manage about 20 per cent.

There is growing awareness and activity by local authorities in the recycling of textiles, which make up 4 per cent. by weight of post-consumer waste. It is reckoned that £400 million worth of cloth is thrown away each year.

A large proportion of the textiles and fibres that we consume is imported. Once again, increased recycling could help to improve the balance of payments deficit. Textile mills in the United Kingdom use about 1 million tonnes of fibre each year, of which 70 per cent. are man-made, 20 per cent. are wool and 10 per cent. are cotton. Textile consumption is also about 1 million tonnes a year and the recycling rate is about 25 per cent. of the total. Second-hand clothing represents 15 to 20 per cent. of total reclaimed fibre.

Those few examples of materials that can be recycled show the advantages in cutting down the amount that goes into landfill as well as the energy and resource savings and, perhaps most important for the Government, because they need some relief in this sector, possible savings for the balance of payments deficit.

Much still needs to be done. The most recent survey on public attitudes shows that consumers have a positive attitude towards recycling. A recent Mintel survey showed that 94 per cent. of consumers believed in recycling. The Government could exploit that positive aspect to recycling in promoting their recycling initiatives.

Mr. Tony Banks: Two categories of our population seem to be most interested in recycling. The first category is the elderly. They remember the shortages of the war and the fact that they were encouraged to recycle waste. Anyone collecting "on the dust" will confirm that collecting from pensioners and elderly people is almost a pleasure, in so far as that task can be considered a pleasure. The second category is young people. I hope that when my hon. Friend is a Minister in the next Labour Government—a little way off yet—he will encourage schools to extend teaching and education about waste and environmentally friendly practices. Kids will then grow up to be responsible elderly people like those we have today who treat their waste disposal as a matter of considerable concern—even with pride.

Mr. Griffiths: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention, and particularly for his aspirations for my career. I agree with him entirely about those people who take a most active part, a pleasure and, as he says, even a pride in recycling. My daughter has recently started teaching in Harrow and her school takes an active interest in that subject. Moreover, organisations like Waste Watch are active in trying to promote recycling and a responsible attitude to the environment through various educational and information programmes.

The Mintel survey found that, having got virtually everybody to say that they believed that recycling was a good thing, there was then a great gap between aspiration and performance—rather like the opinion polls in the general election. The survey found that of the 94 per cent. who were in favour of recycling, only 41 per cent. regularly took their bottles, cans or newspapers to a collection point. The survey concluded that the Government's target of recycling 25 per cent. of all household waste by the year 2000 is unlikely to be achieved unless there is a much greater Government effort to promote recycling initiatives.

It is interesting to look at the reasons why those people did not involve themselves in the recycling to which they gave their support. Thirty-seven per cent. said that it was due to a lack of collection points—that if there were a convenient collection point near their home they would use it. Either they did not know of a collection point or those that they knew of were inconvenient, distant, or out of the way. Twenty-five per cent.—I know that this can be a problem, particularly for those who live in high-rise flats and small homes—said that they did not have enough space to store things.

I must admit that my trips to my local paper and bottle recycling banks tend to be infrequent. Consequently, when I go there I take about half a tonne of paper and a bootful of bottles of various descriptions. Therefore, I sympathise with those who say that they do not have enough space to store things. My own recyclable materials use up a considerable amount of storage space before I am able to take them to the banks.

Ten per cent. said that to separate items for collection was too much trouble. That reflects the experience of local authorities which have been involved in kerbside collection schemes. In those areas, about 70 to 80 per cent. of the people use the facilities provided. Finally, 8 per cent. said that they did not have time to get involved. The survey shows that there is a fair wind blowing for the Government if they want to take more initiatives to encourage recycling. Given the considerable number of references in this debate to reusable containers, it is interesting to note that 54 per cent. are in favour of a money-back scheme and that most of them favour a deposit-led system.

Despite the Government's excellent target, their record is, unfortunately, not very good compared with that of other European Community countries. We are close to the bottom of the class when it comes to recycling glass and paper, two of the major items that can be recycled. When I sought information from the Government about the current recycling lists, the Secretary of State for Scotland hazarded an estimated 2 per cent. The Department of the Environment was excessively generous to itself when it said that it was certainly no more than 5 per cent.

The Welsh Office was so afraid of the reality that it declined to give a figure. Much needs to be done if we are to move from the figure that most experts agree to be about 2·5 per cent. to the 25 per cent. Government target for the year 2000.

I was almost dumbfounded to read in *Hansard* a short while ago a reply from the Department of the Environment to my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), who asked a question about a report compiled by the Institution of Civil Engineers and the Association of Municipal Engineers that was issued midway through last year and was entitled, "Recycling Household Waste: the Way Ahead." The Government's reply was that they regarded the report as a useful contribution. I consider that to be an understatement as that extremely valuable report was drawn up by experts and pointed the way ahead. The report stated that, if the 25 per cent. target was to be met, there was a need for households to separate recyclables, the Government to take more initiatives—particularly to provide further financial support—disposal authorities to change their role and become mainly reclamation authorities, measures to be taken to ensure that industry favoured recycled feedstock, packaging to be minimised and recycled products preferred. With the combination of those factors we would see the end of the throw-away society.

The institution and the association, in a typically humble way, stated that their report should be regarded not as a set of recommendations to form the be-all and end-all of achieving the targets, but as a list of matters for consideration in developing new policies and techniques, and expanded public services. The report was sent to more than 500 local authorities, of which slightly more than half —258—responded. The result of the survey was that the majority of authorities carried out some sort of recycling, but that the amount of material recycled as a percentage of household waste was exceedingly small. For glass, paper and cans, the amount recycled was less than 1 per cent. of all household waste.

The figures for local authorities that recycled specific materials show that 80 per cent. had schemes for recycling and collecting glass, 33 per cent. had schemes for cans, 45 per cent. had schemes for paper, 2 per cent. had schemes for plastic, 37 per cent. had schemes for metals, 29 per cent. had schemes for oils, 2 per cent. had schemes for construction waste and 1 per cent. had schemes for compostables.

Friends of the Earth also conducted a survey to which it received a higher response than did that carried out by the institution and the association. It showed similar, although on the whole slightly better, collection and recycling activities by local authorities. The figures were: glass 89 per cent., cans 48 per cent., paper 55 per cent., plastic 9 per cent., metal 17 per cent., oils 46 per cent., compostables 5 per cent. and for textiles, for which the institution's and association's report gave no figure, 17 per cent. For household goods, it gave a figure of 3 per cent. and 5·5 per cent. for wood.

The target to which everyone refers is that set out by the Government in section 14.23 of "This Common Inheritance". They set the challenging target—that is what they called it—of recycling half of recyclable household waste by the end of the century. That is about 25 per cent. of all household waste. The institution and association said that that would require a supportive marketplace and local initiatives for low-cost schemes and would require industry to finance new productive processes. They said that the Government's willingness to support such measures was fundamental to the development of new initiatives.

The Government are still rather coy and even complacent in their attitude. In a reply to a question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo), the Government said:

"there is no point in setting up comprehensive recycling schemes if there is no market for the materials collected."—[*Official Report*, 13 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. *126*.]

That is true, but, as the Government proved with unleaded petrol, they can take initiatives to ensure that there is a market, in this case for the materials collected.

The Government also said that their preferred approach is for industry to come up with recycling initiatives that will stand the test of time in the free market. Of course, they did not wait for industry to come up with initiatives in the petrol market but took the initiatives themselves. I suggest that they should be taking a similar initiative in recycling to ensure that the necessary market is created. The Government have made a start in paper recycling, but there are many potentially recyclable materials which need a steady market.

In considering the achievement of the 25 per cent. target set by the Government, the institution and the association wanted to ensure that, in the long term, local authorities could achieve it without incurring an increase in service costs for the collection and disposal of household waste.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is my hon. Friend able to clear up the mystery of the 25 per cent. or 50 per cent. target? There was an exchange between the Minister and the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) about whether the target for the year 2000 is 25 per cent. or 50 per cent. of domestic waste. Does my hon. Friend know which it is? The Minister clearly does not, and I think that my hon. Friend could win a few brownie points if he could cut the Gordian knot, so to speak, and explain to ignorant Back Benchers exactly what the Government's target is.

Mr. Griffiths: The answer is that there is an element of both. The 25 per cent. figure is the target for all household waste. The 50 per cent. creeps in because it is the target for

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the part of household waste which is regarded as recyclable. I hope that that has explained the matter satisfactorily.

The institution and the association see the target as a means of conserving natural resources, of saving energy in production and transport, or reducing pollution risks and of saving costs from pollution. Several hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Blaby, referred to the landfill problems of leachates and methane gas. The more recycling there is, the less pressure is put on landfill space. It is also argued that, because of energy savings, there can be a reduction in production costs for goods using recyclable material. For local authorities, there can be a reduction in collection and disposal costs compared with present costs.

The association and the institution are wholly confident that, if the Government accepted a number of specific measures, the target of 25 per cent. would be easily realisable. The evidence from schemes in Leeds, Adur, Milton Keynes and Cardiff points to the fact that the only real way to meet the target is to have kerbside collections in which there has been some separation. Some separation is essential, although it is for authorities to decide exactly how much they will demand. The experience of all the authorities is that households have responded enthusiastically to kerbside collection schemes.

Another essential is a market for the sale of all recycled material. That can best be secured by every operator having as his first priority a recycling strategy. Local authorities giving contracts for waste disposal should require the contractors to co-ordinate the activities of recycling as a principal task. Provisions should be written into the contracts about the amount of material that is to be retained and recycled. Eventually, companies should undertake the reprocessing and marketing of recyclable materials almost as if they were commercial commodity brokers.

The most successful authorities have themselves—or sometimes in association with others—medium or long-term contracts for the materials that they collect. The local authority in Milton Keynes has combined with expertise from a private company in America and experts from Shanks and McEwan to establish a new recycling facility that will be at the heart of the authority's programme to ensure that it reaches the Government's target by the year 2000. The authority is confident that it will reach that target.

The steps that the Government have already taken in the paper sector to encourage the development of a market for waste paper are fundamental. As several hon. Members have said, on occasion there has been chaos in the paper market. Local authorities and voluntary organisations have achieved a reasonable price for selling waste paper into the market one day, but on other occasions they have virtually had to pay someone to take the paper away. As the hon. Member for Rochdale explained, on occasion the position is so bad that a large amount of the paper is thrown into landfill and does nothing to improve the psychology of recycling.

Because of the huge returns that are possible in the paper market—the Government forecast that 1 million tonnes of extra capacity is possible, although that may be optimistic—a huge amount of paper will be available for recycling. If the Government were to provide even more help than they are providing now, we could take a significant step forward in that area.

There is the potential to double the amount of coloured glass that is currently recycled. Problems about clear and coloured glass have been referred to. They could be overcome through better colour separation at collection. Greater efforts need to be taken to collect colourless glass. The Government, and particularly the advertising industry and supermarkets, could do more to encourage the public to accept coloured glass. The problem about the amount of glass that is wasted annually is the way in which supermarkets have not been prepared to accept returnables because they clutter up planning and storage space. The problem has nothing to do with the public dramatically and suddenly saying that they do not want drinks delivered in glass containers.

Mr. Robathan: While I approve of the hon. Gentleman's interest in the matter and delight in his support for my comments, I am sure that he would not mind my saying that he is recycling a few phrases from the debate. While I approve of multi-trip containers, multi-trip comments are a little too much.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. That is for the Chair to judge.

Mr. Griffiths: The issue is so important that the Opposition must place on the record exactly what we believe must be done. I do not believe that the role of the supermarkets has been discussed too much in respect of the move away from refillable containers.

There is huge scope for recycling much more plastic. Two million tonnes of non-food plastic is manufacturered in the United Kingdom. At least half a million tonnes of it could easily be absorbed into the recycling process. There is also huge scope in respect of aluminium and ferrous metals. In the past decade, there has actually been a reduction in the amount of some metals that have been recycled. The Government should examine that aspect.

The association and the institution reckon that it will take about £170 million a year to set up kerbside collection schemes and all the proper facilities for recycling. They offered one or two suggestions about how that might be done. There could be a packaging levy of 25p, which would raise £150 million, and a levy on newsprint. The Government are examining certain fiscal measures. I was surprised by the Minister's comment that they are awaiting reports to see whether anything further needs to be done. They should wait for the reports to see exactly what further action they need to take, because there is no doubt in my mind or in the minds of people who are closely connected with the problems of recycling that further Government action, including fiscal instruments, is needed.

The Friends of the Earth survey concurred with the view that kerbside collection would be essential. It also pointed out that the cost of setting up and running recycling collections is the major problem seen by local authorities. As the hon. Member for Rochdale pointed out, one of the Government's own officials, John Barton, recognised that we will need a form of houshold collection system and further Government support. It was a pity that, on 27 April, when the Minister announced the 25 per cent. increase in recycling investment, he said that he was reluctant to approve new kerbside schemes until he had the

final results of the pilot. Given the survey of the institution and the association and all the information that they already have about pilot schemes, it is clear that the kerbside collection method will be the most effective way forward.

Recycling credits are a good idea, but undoubtedly one of the major problems is the low cost of landfill. The average cost in the Friends of the Earth survey is just over £10 a tonne. I do not believe that that reflects the real cost of a properly managed landfill site. It will be interesting that, when the EC directive finally sees the light of day, when measures to deal with leachates and the post-management of a site in terms of methane gas are considered, with the possible civil liability on people managing a site for perhaps 30 or 50 years after, there will be a huge increase in the cost of landfill, which will make recycling immensely more attractive. I hope that during their presidency of the European Community the Government will push that measure forward so that at an early stage we can re-evaluate the cost of landfill and allow recycling to become effective.

I fear to mention the problems of packaging, given the admonition of the hon. Member for Blaby, but it is a vital point. The Minister referred to the problems that could be caused if the countries of the European Community acted separately. As it is, they have different legislation. In Denmark refillable bottles are mandatory for domestic production of beer and carbonated soft drinks. For imports a deposit, return and recycling system must be set up which has an equivalent effect. There is an absolute ban on beverage cans.

Luxembourg has introduced legislation that will provide for mandatory deposits for refillable bottles, taxes on non-refillable bottles and the possibility of limiting or banning the sale of packaging that presents a danger to the environment. France is introducing laws based on the German system, which is the bane of packagers throughout the European Community. That system has been referred to in some detail. I hope that the Government will support a solution based on the German system because, even though well-meaning initiatives have been taken by the Retail Consortium, the Industry Council for Packaging and the Environment and various other bodies involved in packaging, the only effective action will come when rules and regulations are introduced to govern it.

The Government's study on returnable deposit containers was outlined—I do not know whether it was officially or unofficially—in the "Warmer Bulletin". The report pointed out that compulsory deposit schemes in Denmark, Norway and Switzerland worked well, that product taxes targeting non-reusable containers worked in Finland and Sweden, and that voluntary agreements with industry backed by legislative threats worked in the Netherlands. Overall, the use of deposits was found to be a more than satisfactory way of tackling the problem of throwaway containers.

Following its survey, Friends of the Earth made several recommendations which have been Labour party policy for some years. It concluded that the Government should create markets and stimulate demand for reclaimed materials and that measures should be taken to include setting minimum standards for the content of recycled materials in certain goods. It also recommended obligatory preferential purchase of recycled materials by public bodies and specific sectors of industry.

Friends of the Earth also said that the Government should promote an integrated approach to waste management which should cover raw materials, manufacturing process and the design and use of products, and that priority should be given to the operation and design of processes and products to minimise waste and facilitate the reclamation of materials. Lastly, it recommended that fiscal and other measures should be introduced to encourage industry to increase its commitment to recycling and that tax relief should be provided for the capital costs of recycling plants.

All those recommendations have been Labour policy for some time. Long before charters became fashionable with the Government, we had a recycling charter. The charter says that we should minimise the production of waste products and products that cannot be reused or repaired; we should encourage the manufacture of products that can be reused; we should ensure that, if possible, whatever cannot be reused is recycled; products that cannot be recycled should be used productively; and any residual waste should be disposed of in the safest possible manner. We would use the tax system to provide incentives to achieve those objectives.

Another important objective for the Government during their presidency which would have the full support of the Opposition would be to ensure that the eco-labelling scheme comes into existence. Once established, it should be encouraged through preferential VAT rates, just as the use of unleaded fuel is encouraged through lower excise duty.

Labour local authorities have been pioneering work on recycling. Camden council in London and the councils in Sheffield, Newcastle, Leicester, Leeds, Cardiff, Brighton, Oxford and Milton Keynes are all in the forefront of the battle to ensure that products are recycled, and to achieve the desire of the hon. Member for Blaby for increased recycling, minimisation of waste and the development of returnable bottles and containers. Labour supports all those objectives.

1.21 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I join other hon. Members in thanking the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) for choosing such a riveting and important subject for his first speech in the House. He is obviously blessed with good fortune to be able to win in a ballot—something that many Opposition Members who have been here for years would kill for.

Mr. Robathan: But not at cards.

Mr. Tony Banks: Then I suggest that he take up cards as soon as possible, because it is a considerable achievement to win the ballot shortly after coming to the House, and to use it to make one's maiden speech. I defer to him in that respect. We well remember his predecessor —the glowering presence of Nigel Lawson—especially when he sat on the Back Benches.

Mr. Lawson's translation to the House of Lords is a perfect example of political recycling, though one does not know whether he will receive such a warm welcome from the former Prime Minister, the Lady Thatcher. In the twilight of his career he was being treated more like a piece of hazardous waste than a treasured political item.

To conclude on that subject, I hope that in choosing her title, the Lady Thatcher will go for something in the east

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end of London, where we know a lot about hazardous waste. Perhaps she should call herself Baroness Barking, because I have always wanted to refer to her as the Lady Barking. I thought that would be a most appropriate title for her.

It is also appropriate that the hon. Member for Blaby has chosen to debate recycling. Perhaps he knows something we do not. I understand that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales is making a speech on waste management today. Perhaps the hon. Member is one of many Members of Parliament who apparently advise the Prince of Wales on day-to-day matters.

What surprises me is that so few Tory Members have joined in the debate. I expected to find it difficult to get in today as I thought many of them would wish to speak. Perrhaps they are ashamed of the Government's record. If that is so they are right to be ashamed. The Government have created vast quantities of waste.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): It is not because we are ashamed of the Government's record on this or any other matter, but simply because we are proud of their record on education and would have welcomed an opportunity to debate choice in education, which is the second subject tabled for debate today.

Mr. Banks: Who knows, if the hon. Gentleman is nice to me and my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) we may even reach the second motion. Perhaps we will reach it a bit quicker if the hon. Gentleman does not intervene again.

We are all big people in the House now and we know what we are trying to do. Yes, there will be an opportunity. The hon. Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon), who is sitting nervously on the edge of his seat waiting to make his first speech, can rest assured that he will get that opportunity. I know how he feels. I must tell him that he will continue to feel as nervous as he undoubtedly does now, even when he has made a few more speeches. That is how I feel and how one should always feel. One should never stand up in this place and assume that one can pontificate and everyone will listen with great attention. One should always be humble enough to recognise that there are always many hon. Members who know a damn sight more than oneself about any subject than one cares to talk about. There is not a less appreciative audience than that made up of Members waiting for one to sit down so that they can make their speech. They are not receptive, so I shall not delay the House.

I was talking about the Government's waste production. They should ensure that all these citizens charters are printed on recyclable paper. There was the ridiculous incident of British Rail announcing that a train was running late because of blockages on the line caused by discarded heaps of rail users charters. We must be aware that we produce vast quantities of paper in this place. All of it should be on recyclable paper. That is essential. I know that the Department of the Environment has been looking closely at the matter.

I always said that I would never start a speech with the words, "When I was a lad". I used to hate it when Members started in that way and then banged on about how life was so much better decades previously. I thought that that was so boring. As on many other matters in my time in the House, I have retreated from my previous principled position and I shall start in that way.

The Minister questioned whether returnable bottles and recyclable containers were necessarily the most efficient way of disposing of waste or of producing packaging. When I was a kid I earned quite a packet taking back empty lemonade and beer bottles to the off licence. Indeed, I earned so much that I was called the Bernard Docker of Brixton. I had my own customised pedal car —would you believe it, Mr. Deputy Speaker? It was a Delarge. The House can see from that how much money I was making from returning those Tizer bottles. I remember "Tizer the Appetiser" and, yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so do you. I believe it is still being produced, but in plastic bottles. Tizer, like ginger beer, came with its own attached top, which meant that the whole lot went back to the sweet shop. That is a good example of why we do not necessarily have to look elsewhere in the world for ideas, although it is a good thing to do so; we can look back to what we did previously to see what sort of containers we should bring back into use today. One of the few bottles now to have the flip top or the top still attached can be bought downstairs in the Bar. It contains Grolsch beer. It is far too heavy a brew for me. Certainly, it is far more lethal than Tizer. It is a retrograde step that so few bottles now have such tops.

I am appalled, as we all are, by the amount of material wasted on packaging. We all have our own particular hates in this area. What I hate most are those polystyrene foam pellets—the ones that look rather like prawn crackers and, I am reliably informed, taste better. They are packed round electrical equipment. Even Her Majesty's Stationery Office uses those horrible little pellets when it sends out books. They appal me. Apart from anything else, they are wholly indestructible. Such packaging materials are unacceptable.

Plastic holders for six-packs of cans annoy me. Has anyone seen the damage that they do to sea birds that get their beaks caught up in them? We discard plastics into the sea. One sees ships dumping things at sea and rubbish is blown into the sea. When people go on holiday they take plastic bottles of water that end up in the sea. Turtles think that that plastic trash is jelly fish. Of course, because they eat jelly fish, they eat the plastic and it kills them. It is inconsiderate actions, such as leaving plastic filth on beaches—or on the streets, as many people do in my constituency—that annoy me so intensely. People do not think through the consequences of their actions.

It is essential that we reach a pan-European accord on waste disposal. If one looks at the Mediterranean, which, fortunately, I hope to do on my two-week holiday in August, one can see just how much trash is put into that beautiful sea. Greece has a poor record on waste disposal and recycling. I hope that the Minister will constantly draw that to the attention of the Greek Government so that they look more attentively at waste disposal in their beautiful country. Greece relies on tourism, but tourists are put off when they see the filth that litters the beautiful countryside on islands such as Crete. A pan-European accord is important.

Mr. Miller: My hon. Friend has given a more graphic and eloquent account of the distasteful use, and disposal of plastic than my example of McDonalds. However, I am sure that we are driving at the same point. Does my hon.

Friend agree that the plastics industry and the manufacturers of polyethylene need to be encouraged to find more diverse uses for plastics and, in particular, to discover ways of recycling plastics? To achieve those ends, the industry will need direct help and encouragement from the Government to assist it with research and development.

Mr. Banks: I agree with my hon. Friend. However, McDonalds has a better record of clearing up the litter outside its restaurants than many fast-food outlets. However, I am one of those who think one has a more enjoyable dinner if one eats the container rather than the hamburger. But that is a matter of personal preference.

It is possible to make plastic biodegradable, but that requires much investment in research and development and makes packaging more expensive. The Minister must —to use a horrible and vulgar phrase—establish "a level playing field". If all packaging becomes biodegradable, the cost to the consumer will increase. I accept that. However, it means also that the producers all face equal costs. In those circumstances, the industry will be unable to argue, as some Ministers do, "We like to be on the side of the good, but unless everyone joins us, we shall be at a comparative disadvantage in terms of production." I see the monetarist argument in that and even though it excludes any consideration of morality, I understand it in cash-account terms. However, if we establish a level playing field, it will pay all manufacturers to ensure that their plastic packaging is biodegradable. I hope the Minister will push that point.

I wish to consider the situation in the rest of Europe. In the collection of industrial societies that make up Europe, the role of consumers must be taken into account when we consider environmentally sound production methods. That relates to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller). When people are asked whether they would be prepared to buy environmentally friendly products, most say yes. People are prepared to pay a higher price, if they know that what they are buying is environmentally friendly. However, the producers will have to face the same costs, which reinforces my earlier argument.

It is important for consumers to know more about goods. People want to know how they are produced and whether they are environmentally friendly. When the Minister was asked, in a humorous way, what type of washing-up liquid was used in his home, the question was not designed to embarrass him. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman is beyond embarrassment. A Minister who could make as many sexist points as he made could not possibly be embarrassed by such a question.

If I were his wife—thank goodness I am not, and he is probably grateful that I am not—I would want a divorce, especially after reading the *Official Report* of what he said. I shall make sure that Mrs. Maclean gets a copy of *Hansard* in case the Minister tries to hide his words from her. Frankly, he should be concerned about the information available on packages. He should be giving advice about whether a washing up liquid or soap powder is environmentally friendly.

Mr. Maclean: I should probably know better than to rise to the bait. On the final point that the hon. Gentleman makes, he may know that on Wednesday, in answering questions on the environment, I told the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) that we intend to have the eco-labelling scheme up and ready as soon as possible. We urge the rest of the EC to be on target. There will then be a whole range of products bearing environmentally friendly labels.

Mr. Banks: I look forward to that time, as, no doubt, does Mrs. Maclean. Then she will know precisely what to buy and that there will be no fear of her flouting Conservative policies. I am sure that she is a jolly good and loyal Tory and would not dream of doing so.

The Minister said that the Government were giving encouragement to other European countries. Some of those countries have already introduced special labels, such as the "Blue Angel" label in Germany, which, I am reliably informed, indicates the green quality of a product.

Warning signs in industry—for example, applying to traffic and transportation—are international and used everywhere. Everyone recognises precisely the articles to which they apply. We should have a similar, internationally recognised eco-labelling system throughout the European Community. Such a move would be welcomed by hon. Members in all parts of the House.

Labels that are placed on products should meet certain conditions—first that the raw materials used are environmentally sound and can be recycled; secondly, that the production methods used are sustainable and healthy to the workers who packed and produced the items; thirdly, that the packaging is either returnable, perhaps on the payment of a deposit, or is recyclable; fourthly, that the product and its use does not damage environmental health; fifthly, that the price is fair compared with other products; and sixthly, that the energy consumption in production and use is minimised. I hope that the Minister will insist on those standards when discussing the eco-labelling system.

We need in this country consumer legislation similar to the Right To Know Act in the United States. Although the Americans have produced the majority of the world's waste, they have led the way, in many areas, in recycling and the manufacture of environmentally friendly products.

People in Sweden have for more than 150 years had the right to gain access to information about their neighbourhoods. That has covered information about, for example, the use of natural resources such as air, water and emissions, and has led to the more economic use of such articles in production and to more awareness by consumers when purchasing products.

There is a great willingness in Britain by consumers to play their part. As I said, the people in the population who appear to be most concerned are the elderly and the young, the elderly because they can remember the deprivation of the war and immediate post-war period. Resources were scarce and there was a greater degree of social responsibility towards products, their use and disposal.

Today, the young are greatly concerned because they are realising more and more that they will inherit a polluted world. It is encouraging to visit schools, talk to children in class and see the way in which, as part of the curriculum, teachers are creating lessons that encourage youngsters to be more socially responsible and environmentally conscious. Today's youngsters matter. They will ensure that the world, which our generation and generations before us polluted to such a dangerous extent, will be a safer and cleaner place.

[Mr. Banks]

We can achieve that, even if belatedly. I was glad about Rio. There have been many criticisms and I had many criticisms to make about Rio, but I pay tribute to the Prime Minster, who was prepared to be the first world leader to go to Rio. It is vital to place environmental issues at the cutting edge of political decision making. I do not begrudge the Prime Minister his photo-opportunities. I would do the same, were I to hold such an elevated position——

Mr. Maclean: No.

Mr. Banks: The Minister says no, but he does not know much anyway. He does not even know which washing-up liquid he uses so how can he know whether I shall be Prime Minister?

It was important to get environmental issues on the agenda because they encourage people to think in an environmentally friendly way.

Mr. Win Griffiths: My hon. Friend referred to washing-up liquid. So that the Minister does not feel that he is being singled out, may I tell him that I do the family shopping and we use down to earth washing-up liquid. It is completely satisfactory, healthy and recyclable in every way.

Mr. Banks: My hon. Friend is a veritable saint. He is the ideal partner and, were his wife to throw him out, he would be welcome to live with me and Mrs. Banks because he would be the perfect house guest. That is another reason why I want him to become Environment Minister in the next Labour Government. He is a paragon of virtue.

I had many more points to make, but the ball game, like many things in politics, changed somewhat and I am conscious of the time. I shall conclude on just a few notes about my local authority, Newham.

I have never been mealy-mouthed about the people that I represent, but some of them are the filthiest people on earth. I assume that those must be the few Tory voters in my constituency—but perhaps they are not. When I go out in Forest Gate every morning I see trash discarded the night before, despite the fact that the local authority has installed bins at regular intervals. People often kick the bins over. It is appalling how anti-social some of the people I represent are, and I am sure that that is the view of many hon. Members when they look at their constituencies. We idealise our constituents, but I am damned if I shall idealise the filthy people who trash up my constituency. We must pursue such people.

Although local authorities have been given various powers to fine litter louts, the Minister knows that they do not work. We must ensure that the fines imposed are swingeing and that local authorities step up their street patrols. It is easy to sit down and devise the steps that need to be taken, but the Government must give assurances about the resources that will be available. Local authorities are regularly kicked in this House, almost exclusively by Conservative Members. Yet local authorities are the units of government that affect the day-to-day lives of the great mass of our population. The Government give them more and more tasks while, at the same time, taking away more and more resources from them. It is fine to tell local authorities that they are the primary units responsible for waste disposal and ask them for their plans for achieving 25 per cent. recyclable domestic waste by the year 2000, but local authorities want to know what help the Government will provide for set-up costs.

The Minister mentioned the recycling credit system. If I can catch his attention while a discussion is going on over the crutch of his hon. Friend with feet on the Table, I wish to ask him to pay heed to the fact that the credit system must be looked at. Many local authorities, including mine, and businesses, say that it is a bureaucratic nightmare. The Minister said that he will monitor the system, but I hope that he will pay careful attention to the various representations that I know he will receive about how the system works. My local authority wants to recycle as much as it possibly can. Last year, 700 tonnes of waste were collected in Newham for recycling. That has to be put in context. My authority collects about 80,000 tonnes of refuse a year, so less than 1 per cent. of Newham's waste is recycled. The rest of it goes to the local waste disposal authorities and the bulk of it is sent to landfill sites in Essex.

There are so many things that we want to do in Newham. I am the first to say that it is not the most beautiful spot on earth. How I envy Tory MPs who get up and talk about the rural delights of their constituencies —the green trees, the parks and so on. Unfortunately, that is not true of inner-city constituencies, particularly constituencies such as mine. However, we are trying hard to create a better environment in Newham and to make it a nicer place in which to live. We want to meet the Government's objective by the year 2000, but to do so we want as much encouragement as possible from the Government. We are prepared to sit down with Ministers and work out schemes.

Adur council in West Sussex has an excellent record. In *The Independent* today there is a wonderful article about Adur council. It ought to be widely recognised that Adur council is doing its best and that it is the leading local authority in the whole of Europe. I believe that it is controlled by the Liberal Democrats. I do not care who it is controlled by, but that is one local authority doing an excellent job. I want that excellent job to be replicated throughout the local authority structure. However, as Adur council officials will say, "Recycling is not a cheap exercise; the setting-up costs are very expensive." Everyone praises those councils that do it, including the Minister. However, he must always be aware that when we say that we want more resources it is not just a knee-jerk reaction. The Minister knows from his studies that recycling does not come cheap in the short term. In the long term it is invaluable. I ask the Government to look at local authority projects in the long term and to make sure that the necessary funding is there so that when we have a debate such as this in 20 or 30 years' time when one or two of us, though not me, will still be around, they will say that they remember the great day when the Minister announced these various proposals and that it was the speech of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West that started it all off.

1.46 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I know from long experience that I must not try to match the entertainment value of speeches made by my hon. Friend and neighbour, the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), so I shall not attempt to do so. However, like my hon. Friend,

I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) on his maiden speech and on introducing such an important subject for debate. I have no doubt that, like his predecessor he will have a distinguished career. I hope that he will carry forward the environmental sensitivity that he showed today when it comes to other issues that cause him concern.

I pay tribute, too, to Friends of the Earth, which is active on all environmental issues, including recycling, and has kept up the pressure on the Government on many issues—be they drinking water, transport or nuclear power. I see from its recently published review that the pressure that it put on the Government over recycling led to movement by the Government, particularly over recycling credits, which were not included in the first two drafts of the Environmental Protection Bill. Only after Friends of the Earth had put pressure on the Government were recycling credits included in the Bill. *[Interruption.]* It may be bureaucratic, and that may cause problems, but at least Friends of the Earth is there, and at local level it has put great pressure on councils to introduce recycling schemes and other recycling initiatives. The role played by Friends of the Earth must therefore be taken seriously, and I congratulate the organisation.

I thought that the Minister's contribution was poor, in the sense that he did not seem to take seriously the need for recycling. Judging by the Minister's speech, the Government have just about caught up with Steptoe and Son on the matter of recycling—not a particularly good endorsement. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West spoke of being older than the Minister, but the Minister's performance reminded me more of Steptoe senior's attitude to recycling.

Even Friends of the Earth states that the United Kingdom Government are lagging behind other Governments on the packaging issue. I heard the Minister say that we had to take account of the economic and environmental effects of recycling, and spluttered when I heard him use the word "we". Only this week, I received an answer to my parliamentary question about plants and incinerators seeming to proliferate on the banks of the Thames at the risk of the health of the local community. The Minister said that the matter was nothing to do with his Department but was a planning issue on which he did not propose to intervene or even to set guidelines. He does not seem to take his responsibility seriously.

Before the general election, on 2 March, I introduced an important Bill dealing with newspaper recycling, which I intend to reintroduce at some stage. My Bill would require newspapers to contain a high level of recycled material: I proposed a minimum of 60 per cent. recycled content in four years. If hon. Members think that that is a high target, I disagree and suggest that they read an article by John Clewley, a senior consultant in an engineering company, published in the magazine *Paper Europe:*

The article states:

"The necessary recycling technology has, however, been advanced to such a point that it is now possible to produce high-quality newsprint efficiently from 100 per cent. recycled fibre."

My proposed 60 per cent. minimum level does not seem too high in the light of that article, which continues:

"Not only has the necessary equipment been developed by machinery suppliers but system designers now understand what is needed to produce a good clean de-inked/recycled fibre that will not only run trouble-free on the paper machine but will also produce a quality sheet of newsprint fully suited to its end use."

The end product also has advantages as it is as strong as virgin paper, has a smooth finish, does not need heavy calendering and produces a sheet with low bulk and good deadfold characteristics. It has the spin-off benefit of producing more metres per roll, which results in lower yield losses. So there are also technical advantages to using recycled-content newspapers.

The Government have a voluntary agreement with the Newspaper Publishers Association which sets a figure of 40 per cent. recycled content by the year 2000. That 40 per cent. minimum is far too low, the year 2000 is far too late and there is no law to enforce the agreement. According to the last Government figures, for 1990, the average content was a mere 26·8 per cent.—a low figure, which does not compare well with the record of other countries in Europe and the United States. Many states in America have a higher legal minimum than we do in this country.

An article that appeared in the September 1991 edition of *Resource Recycling*, an American publication, states that efforts are being made in America to reduce landfill problems resulting from newspaper waste. Instead, the recycled matter is being collected. I shall not read it all, but it shows that 22 states have programmes on the stocks, that nine states have mandatory levels of newsprint recycling and that Arizona, California and Connecticut have a target of 50 per cent. by the year 2000. Many states also have stiff penalties of thousands of dollars for those who do not meet the minimum standards. Even the United States, a country not noted for regulation, sees the need for it in this case. The United States is also a very big country which one would have thought had lots of land, but it recognises the problems of landfill, whereas we have only a voluntary agreement which does not go far enough.

Another point in the article in *Resource Recycling* which is worth mentioning involves telephone directories:

"The Yellow Pages Publishers Association, which represents more than 90 per cent. of all directory publishers, recently recommended technical guidelines specifying content goals for all telephone directories. The initial goal is 10 per cent. by 1993, and ultimately 40 per cent. by 1998".

A great deal of virgin wood is wasted in telephone directories although some recycled content could also be used. I asked the Government about recycled content in telephone directories, but they had not even considered the issue. America and some parts of Europe have a better recycling system than this country.

There are three reasons why recycling is important. The first is ecological: it is far better to recycle than to use virgin wood. We know that intensive forest farming damages the environment and destroys natural habitats all over the world, yet the wood from such farming is often used in the paper industry. It is better to recycle the old paper pulp and wood, and I am sure that that notion finds sympathy with many both inside and outside the House.

Secondly, newspapers and magazines comprise about 10 per cent. of Britain's bulk rubbish. A very high proportion could be reused, but only 15 per cent. is recycled, while the rest is put in landfill sites which are not only environmentally ugly but environmentally damaging, because the material rots and forms methane gas which contributes to the greenhouse effect. That is another reason why we should push for more newspapers and magazines to be recycled.

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

Thirdly, the public want recycling. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West said, pensioners would be only too keen to put out packets of newspapers and magazines to be collected if they knew that they would be reused in the interests of the environment, but in most areas people do not have the opportunity to recycle. There are some schemes in London, but not nearly enough. The main reason for the lack of facilities is that there is no market for recycling. By requiring a statutory recycled fibre content, my Bill would have provided a stable market and encouraged new local collection schemes. In addition, it would have created new jobs in the recycling industry.

Those are three reasons why the Government should consider the Bill that I presented in March, which I shall reintroduce and which set out a mandatory scheme for 60 per cent. recycled content in newspapers.

Other measures are needed. There must be Government help in the transitional period for the mills that still deal with virgin pulp. Help is needed to build new mills that can deal with recycled paper, and should be given in the form of capital tax allowances or direct grants, especially for immediate investment in de-inking and repulping plant. I shall reintroduce my Bill.

I conclude with the comments of Friends of the Earth, to which I paid tribute earlier. Peni Walker, one of the organisation's campaigners, said:

"The Government's deal with the newspaper publishers sells the environment short. Their voluntary target is pathetically low, and proves that the Government cannot rely on sweet-talking industry into making real environmental commitments. The voluntary approach clearly does not work. If the Government is serious about recycling 25 per cent. of household waste, it must force industry to meet tough recycling targets, of the kind set out in this Bill."

I hope that the Government will take that on board.

Mr. Robathan: I know that my hon. Friends want to make important comments on the subject of education. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Education (Accountability and Choice)

2 pm

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): I beg to move,

That this House believes that parents know what is in the best interests of their children; believes that parental choice and accountability to parents must therefore be imperative to the country's education system; and welcomes the far-reaching measures that this Government has taken, and is taking, to help realise these essential goals.

I confess that I was not sure at one stage whether I would have the opportunity to move the motion. I am grateful to hon. Members for enabling me to do so. Like the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan), I am making my maiden speech this afternoon as I drew No. 2 in the private Members' ballot a few weeks ago. Naturally, given some of my experiences in education on Croydon local authority in recent years, education was the obvious subject to choose.

I take this opportunity to say a few words about the previous Member for Croydon, North-East. I am unique among the newcomers to the House in succeeding the previous Speaker. I am well aware of the respect shown to him in the House. Despite interventions by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), he was privileged to be recommended to the Queen for a suitable honour to be conferred on him. I am delighted to see that my predecessor is now to be a peer.

Lord Weatherill served the constituency excellently from 1964 until this year and he was well respected by all in the local community. He was not only respected in the House but liked by everyone in the constituency, regardless of political persuasion, and he was an ideal constituency Member. When he became Speaker in 1983, the London borough of Croydon unanimously made him a freeman of the borough. When he retired from the House recently, a civic dinner was held in his honour which was much appreciated by him and by all who attended.

Lord Weatherill had a real love of India and I suspect that that was a result of the fact that during the war, between 1941 and 1945, he served in the Indian army. That experience was especially valuable in Croydon, North-East where there are many Asian people who have enhanced the culture of the area. Lord Weatherill is well respected by them. I recognise that he will be a hard act to follow in the constituency, but I am determined to try to do so.

Croydon, North-East is a typical outer London constituency in many ways, but it has some unique features. It is part of the borough of Croydon, which is the largest London borough. I feel especially privileged to have the opportunity to represent Croydon, North-East, having served on Croydon local authority for 16 years, and as deputy leader of the council for the past six years.

Croydon is a very large town with a large shopping centre and large office complex. Many people are delighted to live there and have the opportunity to live in a pleasant area and, perhaps more importantly, to work in the area, so avoiding the need to commute to London. Croydon is also an example of a well-run unitary authority. Like other London boroughs, it is responsible for services ranging from education, to social services and housing. It also has one of the outstanding leaders in local government in the form of Councillor Sir Peter Bowness. I am particularly

pleased to pay a tribute to his work in building up Croydon. I had the privilege of serving as his deputy for six years.

A council must have a vision and Croydon has a vision in respect of its attempt to ensure that it has a thriving office and business centre, its proposals to introduce a Bill for a light railway system, and the development of a large, new central library, which has been achieved with a low community charge.

I chose education as my subject for this debate because education is a vital service. The challenge is to ensure that all children can reach their full potential. Moving on from education in schools, the challenge is to ensure that when they enter further education or whatever other avenue they follow, they receive the training that they need. This country depends on a well-trained work force if we are to compete properly with the Japanese and Germans.

I also wanted an opportunity to say a few words about my experiences on what I believe is a well-run local education authority. That was one reason why I chose the topic of accountability and choice for the debate. Accountability in education is not new. Primary school reading screening was introduced in Croydon way back in 1975. That was the forerunner of the current standard assessment tasks and much useful experience was gained in Croydon from them.

In the early 1980s, a framework for the curriculum was introduced which, in many ways, was less prescriptive than the national curriculum. In some ways, it is a pity that Croydon's policy was not pursued into legislation. Croydon led on accountability by introducing tests at seven, nine, 11 and 14. Again, those tests were forerunners of standard assessment tests and were in English and mathematics.

I pay tribute to the leadership of the director of education for Croydon at that time, Mr. Donald Naismith. Not so long ago, he was exported to the local authority previously represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford). The work in Croydon has provided the foundation for some of the principles that have now been implemented at a national level.

I do not have time today to go into all aspects of education. Of course criticisms will be made and are made about local education authorities. However, I found Croydon to be a well-run local education authority. Prior to the Government's education reforms in the 1980s, the whole issue of accountability generally in education was a forbidden garden. It was regarded as taboo for parents to question what happened in schools. They did not dare raise the subject. It was not right for people to question teaching methods. Sometimes it was not even right for parents to ask how their children were doing. If they did ask, they were sometimes fobbed off with meaningless statements that they were doing as well as anyone else, without any hard evidence for that.

Gradually, during the 1980s, education was opened up. I welcome that. We published examination results in Croydon early in the 1980s. However, there was much resistance. I regret to say that I still believe that there is an underlying resistance to accountability by many in the education establishment. Certainly, the National Union of Teachers goes hot and cold on that issue.

When one talks about the publication of examination results, it is argued that it is wrong to publish crude examination tables. That is particularly frustrating. I remember back in 1976 challenging teachers in the education establishment to come up with the means of assessing the ability of children at 11 or older so that performance and progression could be properly managed. They have still failed to come up with those proper measures, because the truth is that too many in the education establishment pay lip service to accountability and the monitoring of standards.

I welcome the reforms that were introduced by the Government during the 1980s. There is inevitably a need continually to refine them in the light of experience. We are now starting to obtain experience of SATs, and they are important tests at seven, 11 and 14. They provide information for governors, parents, teachers and, perhaps as important, the education authority and inspectors. Over the past few years, attempts to undermine SATs have concerned me: first, they were over-elaborate and, secondly, they lacked rigour. I was delighted that the former Secretary of State for Education and Science did much to try to put SATs on the right course. There is no doubt that they are the proper way forward; we just have to ensure that they are rigorous enough and do not take up too much time in the classroom.

One matter that is equally interesting in education is that, no matter what results are published, one always finds some people saying, "You can't believe what you see because some schools have a worse intake than others." In other words, they make apologies for the results of schools rather than trying to see why the results are not good enough and then taking steps to improve them.

For a long time, it was argued that the only factors that affected education and performance were socio-economic factors. Sometimes, free school meals and other factors were taken into account. I think that it was in the 1970s when M. Rutter published his famous report, entitled "Fifteen Thousand Hours". It exposed the myth once and for all. However, there was a deliberate attempt by the education establishment to rubbish that report. I am pleased to say that, subsequently, there has been more research by people such as Smith and Tomlinson, who have shown that the effect of the individual school matters. In other words, children from similar backgrounds can achieve vastly different results depending on the school that they are in. There is a school effect. The quality of teaching matters. Even Her Majesty's inspectorate conceded that point this year in a report on primary education.

The truth is that good standards depend on having a good head teacher and good teachers who are committed to striving for excellence in education and are not prepared to accept shabby second best or always look for excuses. It is about creating the right ethos in a school and striving for excellence and never accepting less than the best for youngsters in a school.

If we fail to enable youngsters to achieve their full potential, they will not get a second chance. Some people argue that the only thing that we need to do to improve the quality of education is to increase resources. That is a cop-out. Other countries—Japan is quite a good example—have 55 pupils to the class and achieve better standards than we do. I am not advocating that we should have 55 pupils in a class.

Under this Government, from 1979 to 1992, research carried out by the London School of Economics, not an institution that is biased toward the Government in any

[Mr. David Congdon]

shape or form, has shown that spending in real terms on education has gone up by 20 per cent. That is a significant record.

Some people ask, "Why have accountability?" The reason for accountability is to bring pressure to bear on the education service to improve standards. If we do not know what is going on, we cannot challenge those standards and then bring improvements to bear. For anyone who does not believe that, I quote what occurred in respect of reading.

The local authority in Croydon came in for a fair degree of criticism about reading standards. Why did it receive that criticism? It was because it was one of the few authorities in Britain that carried out testing and had the courage to publish the results. Too many local authorities that carried out testing before standard assessment tasks were introduced were not prepared to publish the results for their education committees, let alone the public.

While accountability is a necessary condition for improvements in standards, it is not sufficient. We have to seek a system that is responsive to parental demands and pressure. That means ensuring that schools that are popular have the opportunity to expand and that those that are unsuccessful are closed. We do the children in unsuccessful schools a grave disservice if we allow the school to continue when it provides a poor-quality education. I am aware that the Department of Education has carried out a consultation exercise on allowing popular schools to expand. I hope that the White Paper will include proposals to enable them so to expand.

I was pleased to read the speech of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the Adam Smith Institute earlier this week, in which he made it absolutely clear that we intend to introduce proposals to deal with schools that do not achieve and do a bad job. That is particularly important. I am sure that hon. Members, especially Conservative Members, look forward to those proposals.

It will be interesting to see how local management of schools works out in the next few years. It is a step in the right direction which enables money to flow with the pupil. That also brings pressure to bear on schools that do not allow youngsters to achieve their full potential.

I turn briefly, because time is short, to the other issue to which my motion refers—choice. We cannot possibly provide real choice for parents if all schools are the same. If all schools are comprehensive, what choice is that? Children must either go to the local neighbourhood comprehensive or they cannot go to school at all. It is a little like Henry Ford with cars—one can have any car as long as it is black. The reforms introduced in the 1980s to provide a variety of schools are much to be welcomed. One such reform was the creation of city technology colleges. We now have two CTCs in Croydon. We managed to set them up in spite of massive opposition from the Labour party in the town hall. The CTCs do a good job for the youngsters who go to them.

We also need to retain a variety of single-sex and mixed schools. In the north of the borough of Croydon in my constituency, the single-sex schools are much appreciated, especially by families from an Asian background, but also by others. We should make sure that such schools are retained. We should also be prepared to encourage authorities that wish to retain their grammar schools or perhaps reintroduce grammar schools. But perhaps a better way of doing that is via the grant-maintained route. I also note with interest the measures taken in Wandsworth which enable schools to become magnet schools so that a variety of schools is available from which parents can choose.

Assisted places are yet another means of providing variety and choice, but perhaps the most important measure that we have taken is the introduction of grant-maintained schools. Grant-maintained status is a logical extension of local management of schools. Once the funding of schools is put on a formula basis, why not free them from the dead hand of the local authority and enable them to thrive and go in whatever direction they wish? I look forward to proposals in the White Paper to encourage a dramatic growth in the number of grant-maintained schools and enable schools to achieve whatever they want in order to meet the needs of youngsters in their area. It is all about removing power from the centre and moving it down to the locality. That is a way of providing real choice.

In conclusion, I am convinced that the reforms of the 1980s have laid the foundation for a better education system and I am pleased to know that there will be a White Paper. I hope that it will build on those reforms and will create an education system which is responsive to parents' needs and will ensure that we have a well-trained work force to meet the needs of the coming decades.

2.19 pm

Mr. David Faber (Westbury): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me to speak for the first time in the House.

In the short time available, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon) on his excellent maiden speech in which he mentioned many issues with which Conservative Members are in agreement, and on successfully introducing the motion today, in spite of what seemed to be the best efforts of the Opposition. I add my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) on his excellent maiden speech.

I hope that hon. Members will understand if I find myself losing interest in the rest of the debate. I came to the House to make my maiden speech this morning with considerable misgivings and trouble of mind. Like many other new Members, I had planned my speech for some time. As is often the custom, I was looking forward to making it in the presence of my family. Sadly, my father suffered a fairly severe stroke last night and most of my family are at his bedside, a few hundreds yards away at the Westminster hospital. I confess that, had I known that I would have to wait five hours to make my maiden speech, my time might have been better spent at his bedside than listening to some of the matters raised by Opposition Members. However, it is a salutary lesson for me, at such an early time, to understand the proceedings and the way in which the House works.

I come here as successor to Sir Dennis Walters, who represented Westbury for about 28 years. Hon. Members who knew him well will not be surprised to hear that he made his maiden speech in 1964 during a debate on foreign affairs, which was a subject that he pursued successfully throughout his time in this place. He spoke about the middle east, as he did throughout his career, with a

knowledge and understanding that I believe were universally admired. Hon. Members may not always have agreed with his arguments—the House was frequently divided in its support for the party line that he sometimes took—but he was an acknowledged expert.

I know, too, that Sir Dennis was particularly proud of the Children and Young Persons Bill, which he saw through the House as a private Member in 1985. It has since been superseded by the Children Act 1989, which contains many of the measures that he introduced. He was always a popular constituency Member, he was hard-working, and he kept in touch with his constituents. We wish him and Bridget well in what I hope will be a long and happy retirement.

I am fortunate to have been sent here by the electors of the Westbury constituency, which takes its name from the town that lies geographically at the heart of the constituency, which also comprises west Wiltshire and a small part of the Salisbury district. Hon. Members from the west country will doubtless be familiar with seeing the town's railway station as they speed further west. Westbury originally made its name as a railway town. Now it is home to thriving businesses and light industries, as well as to the Blue Circle cement company, an internationally famous company which finds that the concept of the European single market has a somewhat hollow ring as the Government continue to subsidise the dumping of Greek cement on the European market.

To the north lies the principal centre of population, the town of Trowbridge, which is the county town of Wiltshire. You will be pleased to know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is the home not just of Wiltshire county cricket club but of the combined minor counties team when they play together.

Trowbridge has a long and proud history, especially as a successful and wealthy woollen town. Now it is a bustling and successful industrial centre and home to some famous names which have not only survived the recession but are thriving and expanding. Hon. Members who are planning barbecues for the summer will be interested to know that the largest employer in the constituency is Bowyers, who have been manufacturing the British sausage in Trowbridge for more than 180 years. Just down the road can be found the Ushers brewery—one of the country's most famous and successful independent brewers. If I feel just a tinge of regret, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that your colleague Madam Deputy Speaker is not in the Chair today, I hope that you will forgive me, but with her Devon roots I have no doubt that she would be familiar with one of Ushers' more potent brews known locally as Widecombe Wallop and widely sold in the pubs of the famous Dartmoor village of that name.

To the north of Trowbridge are the towns of Melksham and Bradford on Avon. Melksham, long before it was a town, was no more than a small village in a large Wiltshire forest. Now it is known as the home of the Avon Tyre and Rubber company, the largest company in the constituency and a constant success story abroad, which follows a tradition of manufacturing tyres and rubber-related products that goes back over 100 years.

To the south of the constituency lies the fifth town, Warminster, an important military centre throughout the ages. Although the town dates from Saxon times, the surrounding downs were occupied by iron and stone-age settlers who left behind them at Battlesbury Camp one of the major iron-age forts in the United Kingdom. Now it is home to the School of Infantry, the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers workshops and visiting battalions at Battlesbury barracks. It is a crucial point for the Army, situated as it is on the edge of Salisbury plain.

I am especially glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-East chose the subject of education for debate today, however little time we may have to debate it. It is noticeable that this is the first opportunity that we have had to debate the subject since the Labour party's astonishing about-turn on education policy, especially with regard to its attitude to grant-maintained schools.

In Wiltshire, we are fortunate to have a Conservative county council and a forward-looking local education authority. Until recently the council was balanced on a knife edge, but it has now moved to a Conservative majority thanks to the much-welcomed and much-publicised defection of the Labour group leader to the Conservative benches. The remarks in his resignation statement are apposite to today's debate. He said:

> "The Labour Party is today, at national and local level, in a state of total confusion, quite unable to put forward ideas to meet the problems of the modern world. Many of the rank and file still cling to ideas that are twenty to thirty years out of date and show little imagination in their simple, doctrinaire slogans of political frustration."

One is left to wonder whether a major reason why Labour Members still find themselves on the Opposition Benches after the general election could be partly because of their misguided education policies and their refusal to accept, at least until last week, that parents want more choice and diversity in schools.

In west Wiltshire we have many excellent schools, both secondary and primary. The LEA has been at the forefront of implementing the Government's reforms. Local management of schools has been widely welcomed and successfully introduced. Wiltshire is near the top of the national league table for national curriculum assessment. Exam achievements at GCSE and A-level are constantly improving.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-East, I believe that if true diversity is to be achieved in our schools, it will be done only through grant-maintained status. Recently I was concerned to see in a written reply from my hon. Friend the Minister that Wiltshire languished near the foot of the table for LEAs in terms of the amount in the budget held back from schools for administrative costs.

St. Augustine's school in Trowbridge was the first school in Wiltshire, and one of the first in the country, to go grant maintained. It has proved a role model for others to follow. I was pleased that the Secretary of State recently also approved the application of Aloeric primary school in Melksham. Ask the headmaster of St. Augustine's what GMS has meant for his school and he will tell us unequivocally: more money, yes, and the freedom to spend it on new books and equipment as he chooses. The school is well maintained, the children well turned out, and the school roll over-subscribed. Above all, it has given the headmaster the ability to respond better to the true needs and wishes of his local parents. The real benefit lies in the increased independence that his school now enjoys.

I have no doubt that we are seeing the beginning of a process that will lead to a flood of applications for grant-maintained status. I look forward to the White

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Paper that the Government plan to introduce later in the summer, which will be a logical further step in continuing the Government's successful education reforms.

2.29 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): In the brief time that is available, I congratulate the hon. Members for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon) and for Westbury (Mr. Faber) on their maiden speeches. It is a custom of the House for those making maiden speeches to say a few kind words about their predecessors. Both hon. Gentlemen did that, and I am sure that that will be well received. It is also customary for maiden speeches to be non-contentious. Had we had a little more time, perhaps, the hon. Gentlemen would appreciate that they did not achieve that objective.

I hope that the father of the hon. Member for Westbury recovers——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Orders of the Day

EUROPEAN UNION (PUBLIC INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 June.

CONSOLIDATION BILLS

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Protection of Badgers Bill *[Lords]*, the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Bill *[Lords]* and the Tribunals and Inquiries Bill *[Lords]*, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bills have been read a second time.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 23rd June, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Clarke relating to Criminal Law not later than one and a half hours after the first such Motion has been entered upon; and the aforesaid Motions may be proceeded with after the expiry of the time for opposed business.

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 23rd June, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 9 (Sittings of the House), the Motion for the Adjournment of the House in the name of the Prime Minister shall lapse at the end of a period of one and a half hours after it has been entered upon; and the aforesaid Motion may be proceeded with after the expiry of the time for opposed business.

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 24th June, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), and unless they have been disposed of previously, the Speaker shall—

(1) put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Howard relating to the Special Grant Report (No. 4) and on the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Hunt relating to the Special Grant Report for Wales for 1992-93 at Seven o'clock or three hours after the first Motion has been entered upon, whichever is the later;

(2) put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Howard relating to the draft Charge Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order 1992 not later than three hours after the Motion has been entered upon; and

(3) the aforesaid Motions may be proceeded with after the expiry of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Resolved,

That Dr. Lewis Moonie be appointed to the Public Accounts Commission in place of Mr. Peter Shore, under the National Audit Act 1983.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

School Allocation (Bromley)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes]*

2.31 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): It may be unusual, but I hope it is not out of order, if I start by adding my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Mr. Faber) on his maiden speech, which we much enjoyed. He comes from a distinguished family, but, clearly, he will establish himself as a parliamentarian in his own right. I also hope, in common, I am sure, with all hon. Members, that his father makes a recovery.

My debate continues the theme of education. Every year, thousands of families, up and down the country, experience the transfer process when their children move from primary to secondary educatoin. I have experienced that process three times. Parents visit the schools, usually in the autumn, complete forms to show their preference and, by April, receive offers. Perhaps, they are offered their first or second choice or another option. Sometimes, the parents will be delighted, but, on occasions, they will be disappointed. However, at least they know the school to which their child will go in the following September and, remain at, one hopes, for a number of years.

At the beginning of April this year, a letter was sent to the parents of 255 children in the London borough of Bromley. It began:

"I am writing to explain why, at this time, it is not yet possible to offer your son or daughter a place in a Bromley all ability school."

A substantial proportion of those parents are my constituents, but some are the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant), who hopes to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, later. Some of the parents are constituents of my hon. Friends the Members for Ravensbourne (Sir J. Hunt) and for Orpington (Mr. Horam), who, because of constituency engagements, cannot be present today, but who have asked me to emphasise that they fully support my representations.

It is not difficult to imagine the distress caused to families by that letter, and especially to the children who found, perhaps, that they were the odd ones out in the class because they did not know their future. Gradually, the situation has been resolved and, by now, I hope that virtually all the children affected have been offered a place at a school somewhere in the borough. But that is after many weeks of uncertainty and worry which should not have occurred and which must not be allowed to recur.

There are two elements to the problem—the rapid development of the grant-maintained sector and the impact of the Greenwich judgment. The idea of grant-maintained schools has caught on in Bromley. Of the 17 secondary schools, eight are now grant maintained. Parents who want places for their children in those schools apply direct to the schools and not to the education authority. So inevitably there is double, if not treble, booking.

The difficulties were compounded by the fact that the grant-maintained schools were able to offer places in December whereas the education authority's date is April. Some parents who perhaps wanted a specific LEA school held on to their grant-maintained offer just in case they did not get the LEA school of their choice.

The problem is a lack of co-ordination and co-operation between the two sectors. I am not seeking to apportion blame but stating a fact. We are in new territory here, and there is no mechanism for co-ordination.

The grant-maintained schools co-operated with each other and organised a database at one of the schools to co-ordinate all the applications, and where they found that parents had accepted two places, they were asked to decide which one they wanted. It must be possible to devise a system of co-ordination of the application and offer procedure.

The local education authority is asking if it can have the grant-maintained lists in December to assist it in what it must do. The grant-maintained sector, understandably, is nervous about doing that, particularly in view of the aspects of confidentiality. The parents may not be happy and would need to be reassured that the disclosure of an application for a grant-maintained school did not prejudice an application for an LEA school and vice-versa.

It would not have to be the LEA that operated the scheme. The grant-maintained schools already have their own scheme, and next year we shall have three more grant-maintained schools shifting the balance to 11 grant-maintained to six LEA schools. I am not necessarily urging the Minister to devise and impose a detailed scheme, but guidance from his Department would be helpful, not only to Bromley but to other LEAs in a similar situation.

The other dimension is the outcome of the legal proceedings encapsulated in the phrase the Greenwich judgment. It has long been the practice for LEAs to accomodate applicants from adjacent authorities where places are available, but the effect of the Greenwich judgment is that where the nearest school to a child's home is in an adjacent authority, that authority must accept the application regardless of any other pressures. So the education authority is obliged to take children from another authority in preference to its own children. For historical and geographical reasons, a number of Bromley schools are very near to the borough boundaries.

That makes planning by education officials extremely difficult, because they must accept, or try to take into account, unspecified and unforecastable numbers who will come from elsewhere to schools in the borough, in addition to those being taken from within the borough. It also means that Bromley parents are incensed at being unable to get their children into the schools of their choice, while seeing that children from other authorities can get into them.

An effective demonstration of the problem occurred when, in April, the borough wrote to 255 borough parents telling them that there were as yet no places for their children, and it had to write at the same time to tell 351 out-borough parents that their applications had been accepted.

Bromley was not caught unaware. It realised the implication two years ago and warned the Government. I drew attention to the matter, as did many other hon. Members, several times. Indeed, I introduced a private Member's Bill to remove the effect of the Greenwich judgment. It was resisted by the then Minister; his response to my pleas was that I should, first, wait until the legal proceedings had taken their full course and, secondly, see what the effect of the judgment would be in practice. The legal proceedings have culminated in the confirmation

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of the Greenwich judgment as law, and education authorities have had the experience of having to allocate accordingly. Bromley has now had two years' experience.

In January 1992, the then Minister wrote to me explaining the Government's reaction to the position. He said:

"we will not be pursuing a change in the law to allow LEAs to give priority to their residents when allocating school places."

He said that, although he understood the difficulties:

"On the basis of the evidence submitted to us, however, it does not appear to us that such practical problems as LEAs have encountered have been sufficiently serious to warrant our pursuing a change in the law".

How much evidence does the Department want?

I have raised the issue in the context of Bromley but it is not confined to Bromley. I accept that the problem may have arisen only in certain areas such as conurbations, but the problem has arisen in London and some other parts of the country such as the west midlands. Representations have been made by the London Boroughs Association, 13 of whose 20 members are experiencing serious difficulties. There are problems in Barnet, Kingston, Westminster, Redbridge, Richmond and Sutton. My hon. Friends the Members for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) and for Surbiton (Mr. Tracy) have asked to be associated with my representations.

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene on one point in his support. Is he aware that 265 homes are troubled with anxiety and misery in the London borough of Barnet, which includes Finchley, because they have been unable to have their first choice of school agreed by the local authority. That is principally because 167 children from another borough have had their first choice permitted, which means they go to school in Barnet. That is educationally useless because, instead of putting pressure on and giving an incentive to boroughs around Barnet to improve their education, extra pressure and burden is put on a local authority that is known in the south-east to have excellent education provision.

Mr. Sims: I did not have those figures in my mind, but I am grateful to my hon. Friend for illustrating the point that I sought to make: the problem affects many areas and is not confined to Bromley.

The position is most unsatisfactory and is intolerable in practical and legal terms. As the Minister knows, education authorities have a duty, under section 8 of the Education Act 1944, to secure provision of education for children in the authority area. That cannot be reconciled with the requirement now placed on authorities to provide places for children from other areas. The two requirements are simply incompatible. Incidentally, I invite the Minister to consider what will happen in a few years' time if all the schools in Bromley become grant maintained, but the local authority retains responsibility for securing provision.

I do not ask for a radical change in the law but simply that the law be restored to what everybody thought it was until the courts decided otherwise. There are strong indications that we can expect an education Bill in the autumn. All that I am asking is that it should include a clause to deal with the issue. I can offer my hon. Friend a ready-made clause, at no extra charge, in my private Member's Bill.

School allocation procedures are never likely to be completely painless. It is rarely possible to meet everyone's first choice. Families change their minds and move in and out of areas, which causes complications. The process should, however, be as smooth as possible. The trauma experienced this year in Bromley must certainly not be repeated. To that end, my pleas to my hon. Friend are that he should initiate a co-ordinated admissions procedure and implement a reversal of the Greenwich judgment. I hope that he will consider both sympathetically.

2.45 pm

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): I am most grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) for sparing some of his valuable time to enable me to back up many of the excellent points that he has made. May I take this opportunity to congratulate him on tabling this Adjournment debate and to endorse the general tenor of his remarks. I stress to the Minister the very grave concern that is felt across the London borough of Bromley, of which Beckenham is part, by large numbers of parents —not just those with children of secondary school age but those with children who, in the years ahead, will be of secondary school age.

I have received a particularly heavy mailbag on the subject and have attempted to help in a number of individual cases. I have no doubt, however, that there are other equally deserving cases. A letter that I received reads:

"My daughter is the only girl in her class who has not been offered a place at the local secondary school. What do I tell her? She thinks there's something wrong with her."

The problem does not affect just parents, who are obviously ambitious that their children should have the best education. It also affects their children. In the last few weeks it has even extended to primary school admissions. Some small children feel rejected if they are in a minority, particularly a minority of one, in having been unable to obtain a place at the local school.

This is not just a technical or an administrative issue. It affects children at particularly vulnerable times in their lives and is therefore causing them heartache. That is why it is a serious issue which must be addressed.

Even if the problem that is experienced in Beckenham, Bromley and some other London boroughs is not encountered nationally, some guidance from the Government is still necessary to help to sort out the specific problems in these areas. Earlier this month the education committee in Bromley took a number of steps that it hopes will alleviate the problem in the year to come.

Bromley does not suffer from a bad education system. It has excellent schools and offers the superb, wide choice of schools that was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon) in his excellent maiden speech in the previous debate. The widening of choice, which I hope will be widened still further, must not, however, be at the expense of people's traditional expectation of a place for their children in the local school. That is what is being brought into question, for the two reasons that were referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst.

The first reason was grant-maintained schools. They are extremely popular in Bromley. That is why they were set up. They attract record numbers of applicants. However, parents have tended to hold more than one place. That leaves local education authorities appearing to

be full, because of second places held. Later they find that all their places have not been filled, which has a knock-on effect on allocations.

In the long term, the grant-maintained problem is a minor one which can be solved by relatively easy administrative co-ordination. I am not talking about allocation by local education authorities. We have moved away from that. I am referring to a degree of co-ordination that could easily be put in place.

The second reason is the out-of-borough problem—the Greenwich judgment. The simplest solution is for the Government to reverse the Greenwich judgment.

That would be the easiest solution for Bromley and would do away with the underlying problem. It is not even that the Greenwich judgment provides true open enrolment as it gives that advantage to children in the neighbouring borough who happen to live within the zone of the relevant school. It gives them a preferential advantage over other children in the borough. If the Government are unable or not prepared to act, they still have an obligation to deal with the uncertainty caused by the Greenwich judgment and should give advice on how to tackle the problem without disadvantaging children in Bromley.

What is certainly needed and must be put in place for next year is a system to deal with all the new complexities. It must be thorough, understandable, transparent to parents and properly administered. To achieve that, Bromley needs the help of my hon. Friend the Minister who I hope will carefully study the options available.

2.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Eric Forth): I join in congratulating my hon. Friends the Members for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon) and for Westbury (Mr. Faber) on two of the best maiden speeches that I have had the privilege to hear. They were both fluent, knowledgeable and showed a commitment to their views. I am happy to say that they also showed a commitment to Government policy, which is always a relief, and I am sure that that will stand them in good stead for long careers in the House.

I also pay tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Chiselhurst (Mr. Sims), for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) and for Finchley (Mr. Booth), all of whom made no secret of their concerns for their constituents on this important issue. In their different ways, they have knowledgeably and persistently ensured that my Department is fully aware of the problem highlighted in the House today by my hon. Friend the Member for Chiselhurst. We all hope that we can find solution to the problems that cause such anguish to many parents.

I am aware that the allocation of school places in the London borough of Bromley this year has caused widespread concern. I wish to put on the record the different factors that have contributed to the difficulties that parents faced earlier this year. I understand that some parents even believed that there might not be any place for their children in Bromley. I am assured that that alarming view was not what the local authority intended to convey to parents through the letter read out by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst. It is unfortunate that the impression that there were no places gained currency in the borough. Looking back, it is easy to see how that happened, but we all hope that it will not be repeated in any form.

Views have been expressed about the effect of the Greenwich judgment. As the House heard, we know that it was a court ruling that judged it illegal for a local education authority to give priority to its own residents when allocating school places. The Greenwich judgment has meant that some parents in some parts of Bromley have found that their chances of gaining a place for their children at their preferred schools have been reduced. Understandably, those parents find the changes in admission patterns difficult to accept. My hon. Friends have made no secret of that and have expressed their views forcefully in the House today.

We should not exaggerate the importance of the Greenwich judgment. As I think my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst conceded, parents from neighbouring local education authorities sent their children to Bromley schools for a number of years prior to the judgment. The effect of the judgment on the increased number of out-borough children admitted to Bromley schools must be put in the context of the large number of children who attend the excellent schools in Bromley. The new system has had an effect by opening up places at Bromley schools to pupils from other boroughs who live nearer to those schools than do many Bromley residents.

My predecessor announced as recently as January this year the previous Secretary of State's decision, taken in the light of factual evidence from a number of education authorities, not to seek to change the law to reverse the effect of the Greenwich judgment. In preparation for this debate and other recent meetings with my hon. Friends representing other London boroughs—I have more such meetings to which to look forward—I, too, have looked carefully at the issues.

There is no doubt that the Greenwich judgment surprised my Department as much as it surprised those in the local education authorities. However, the ruling reflected some basic principles that we all recognise. Having one's choice of school affected, not only by a straightforward measure, such as distance from the school, but by the existence of an administrative boundary, is much less easy to justify now than it was 10 years ago. With the increasing delegation of power and influence to the school from the LEA, and in particular with more and more schools taking grant-maintained status and opting out of LEA control, the school and its local area are now of much more relevance than the LEA boundary. It would be odd to seek to reinforce such boundaries at this stage.

We must also consider the current review of local government, a timely reminder that administrative boundaries are not for ever or unchanging. The Greenwich case was brought because the new London borough boundaries cut across traditional patterns of school transfer. Parents were upset by being barred from nearby schools because of a boundary change. With any significant redrawing of boundaries, which must be a possibility, and particularly if there is a move to smaller authorities, we should have major problems on a national scale if at the same time we sought to give those new boundaries the force of law in school admissions.

I do not seek to deny the degree of concern that Bromley parents and others from other boroughs and authorities have expressed because their expectations—of a particular school in their own borough—have not been

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met, but it is important to remember that free trade across boundaries seems as self-evidently right to some parents and schools as the ability to get into a school in the same borough seems to others. Although I will consider carefully all that has been said today on this subject and continue to consider carefully the most recent evidence, I shall need some convincing that the current position should be further disrupted by legislation which, I remind the House, even on the tightest timetable envisaged could not affect admissions until September 1994—those admissions being planned in autumn 1993.

The second factor affecting this year's allocations procedure in Bromley is the number of new admission authorities in the borough. Grant-maintained schools, like voluntary-aided schools, are free to set their own timetables for admissions and there are now a number of such schools in Bromley, I am delighted to say.

It appears that some parents who exercised their right to apply to different schools and received several offers did not release any of the places they were offered until the result of all their applications were known, including the results of any appeals that they may have made. In some cases, they simply forgot to let other schools know that they had received an offer they preferred.

Let me make it clear that I am not seeking to blame parents in Bromley for the delay in allocating places. All parents want the best for their child and it is natural that parents should retain offers of places until they know the options available to them. Once they know which offer they are going to accept, however, parents should take prompt decisions and tell all concerned what they have decided so that places can be offered to other parents who want them.

I am pleased to say that the bottleneck which was created in Bromley this year is now almost cleared. Of the parents who were informed by the LEA in April that there were at that stage no places available for their children in Bromley schools, almost all have now been offered places. I understand that the authority expects to be able to offer places to the remaining handful of applicants in the next few days.

We will keep in close touch with the authority about those parents and children who still face uncertainty, but I should make it clear to the House that it by no means unusual for final decisions on school admissions to be taken at this time of year. For those who choose to go to appeal or ask to be placed on waiting lists, it may even be later.

To answer my hon. Friends, we are certainly prepared to consider taking steps to ensure that the admission arrangements set up by LEAs, grant-maintained and voluntary-aided schools are properly co-ordinated, so as to avoid the problems which have occurred this year. We know that Hillingdon and some other authorities plan co-ordinated arrangements with grant-maintained schools next year, and we shall keep in touch with progress to see how well they work.

I hope that Bromley, too, will be able to work together with local grant-maintained schools more effectively next year. I understand that it will consult grant-maintained schools on possible arrangements to share information. We have encouraged the LEA in that approach and will be writing to the grant-maintained schools to encourage co-operation. I hope that no more general central intervention will be necessary. LEAs have managed to work successfully with voluntary-aided schools for a number of years and I am confident that, with good will on both sides. Bromley will be able to do the same with grant-maintained schools. Local arrangements that meet the needs of local parents are surely to be preferred to any centrally imposed solution.

I appreciate, of course, that however smoothly the allocation of school places in Bromley may run in future, some parents, both those living inside and those living outside Bromley, may apply unsuccessfully to their preferred school and I know that they will be anxious about their children's future. That is natural and understandable. I urge parents in such a position to make full use of the appeals system. There can be no guarantee of success, but parents would lose nothing by exercising the statutory rights which we have given them. More than 40 per cent. of appeals are settled in the parents' favour.

We should like to increase the number of parents who are able to send their children to the school of their choice. We want to play our part by making available resources to allow some popular schools to expand, as my hon. Friends have said. We have recently consulted on those proposals. It is too early to say whether particular Bromley schools will benefit from any new scheme, but we will certainly give very careful consideration to any bids we receive.

When my predecessor announced that the Government did not intend to change the law to reverse the Greenwich judgment, he also made it clear that the needs of local authorities to incur capital expenditure to ensure that sufficient school places are available for their own residents will continue to be recognised in the allocation of borrowing authority for such expenditure.

The authority's schools have been popular with out-borough parents for a number of years. It is for the authority to decide whether its current level of provision remains appropriate. I understand that it put forward a bid for capital cover for a new secondary school in 1992-93, but withdrew the bid before we had considered it.

It was timely and right for my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst to bring this important subject to the House today. I give him my assurance that I am very much seized of its importance and of the widespread concern among parents, especially in Bromley, but also in other authorities. I assure my hon. Friends that I will continue to give the matter thought. I have not closed my mind to the possibility of making some of the changes that my hon. Friends suggested. I ask them and the parents involved not to be too——

The motion having been made after half-past Two o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at one minute past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 8 June 1992

HOME DEPARTMENT

Disabled Voters

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many grants were *(a)* received and *(b)* approved in the last financial year for portable ramps to enable church and other authorities to adapt polling stations to meet the needs of disabled voters.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Grants towards the purchase of temporary ramps to provide access to polling stations for disabled voters are paid to returning officers. About 25 grants for the purchase of temporary ramps were paid in the financial year 1991-92. No applications for grants were refused. In addition, a few applications which were received in the last financial year will be paid during the current year.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to allow grant aid for church and other authorities providing polling stations for local and national elections to meet the needs of disabled voters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Councils are required, so far as is reasonable and practicable, to designate as polling places only places which are accessible to the disabled. Where this is not possible, grants are available to returning officers towards the purchase of temporary ramps. Permanent adaptations to improve access for disabled people to buildings used by the public are the responsibility of the owners of the buildings. Returning officers' fees are not a suitable means of providing assistance towards such adaptations.

Homosexual Offences

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many men were sent to prison in each of the last five years for convictions involving consenting sex with men aged over 16 years and under 21 years; and how many such convicted prisoners there are at present;

(2) how many prosecutions have taken place in each of the last five years for offences involving consenting sex with men aged over 16 years but under 21 years; and how many convictions there were.

Mr. Jack: The table gives information on consensual acts of buggery or attempted buggery of a male of, or over 21, with another male under the age of 21, with consent —Sexual Offences Act 1956, section 12 as amended by the Sexual Offences Act 1967, section 3(1).

Information on the numbers currently serving a custodial sentence in a prison service establishment in England and Wales for these offences, is not presently available centrally.

Number of persons prosecuted, convicted and sentenced to immediate custody for consensual sexual offences,[1] 1986-90

England and Wales *Number of persons*

Year	*Prosecutions*	*Convictions*	*Sentences of immediate custody*
1986	24	21	12
1987	21	13	7
1988	19	24	11
1989	8	17	10
1990	10	9	8

[1]Buggery or attempted buggery of a male of, or over 21 with another male under the age of 21 with consent.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if specific guidelines exist for prioritising education bids for section 11 funding.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No specific guidelines have been issued about how local authorities should exercise their own judgment in prioritising their applications for section 11 funding, either within or between education and other service areas.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate total spending by his Department for section 11 grants, at current prices, for each year since 1987, and projected allocation for section 11 funding in 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The total amount of section 11 grant paid in each financial year since 1987-88 at current prices was as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	123·0
1988-89	109·5
1989-90	132·8
1990-91	144·9
1991-92	113·0

Current expenditure plans are as follows:

	£ million
1992-93	129·7
1993-94	136·0
1994-95	139·0

Expenditure plans for 1995-96 will be included in the autumn statement.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate for each year since 1987, in both net figures at current prices and as a proportion of total section 11 funding, the amount of section 11 money allocated to non-education bids.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Under arrangements operating until 31 March 1992, precise figures for the amount of grant paid for non-education expenditure are not available. It is estimated, however, that non-education provision has accounted for approximately 20 per cent. of total grant in the past.

For new projects starting in 1992-93, the provisional allocation in respect of the potential grant cost of non-education projects in 1992-93 is some £11·5 million representing some 11 per cent. of the total grant.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for 1991-92, what proportion of section 11 bids which were given high priority by local authorities were not approved by his Department.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As a result of the consideration of bids submitted in 1991 for funding under the new arrangements for section 11 grant to take effect from 1 April 1992, 17 per cent. of project bids listed in the top 20 per cent. of local authorities' priority lists were not approved.

Immigration

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans Her Majesty's Government have to ratify the convention determining the states responsible for examining applications for asylum lodged in one of the member states of the European Community signed in Dublin on 15 June 1990.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We plan to ratify the Dublin convention shortly.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many husbands have applied from Pakistan for settlement visas to join their wives in Britain in each of the last three years; how many have been granted; and how many have been refused.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is given in the table.

Applications for entry clearance made by husbands in Pakistan

Number of persons

	Newly received	*Granted initially*	*Granted on appeal*	*Granted (total)*	*Refused initially*
1989	1,760	630	100	730	1,430
1990	1,950	600	400	1,000	1,550
1991	2,270	960	540	1,500	1,610

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many wives have applied from Pakistan for settlement visas to join their husbands in Britain in each of the last three years; how many have been granted; and how many have been refused.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is given in the table:

Applications for entry clearance made by wives in Pakistan

Number of persons

	Newly received	*Granted initially*	*Granted on appeal*	*Granted (total)*	*Refused initially*
1989	3,060	2,760	80	2,840	140
1990	2,800	2,750	200	2,950	340
1991	2,900	2,900	110	3,010	360

Entry Clearance

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when the adjudicators' decision was received by his Department in the case of NB, date of birth 1 June 1966, and fiance of ABH, date of birth 8 October 1968; and if he will give reasons for the delay in issuing entry clearance;

(2) if he will seek to improve the length of time it takes to issue entry clearance after a decision by the adjudicator;

(3) what is his target for the length of time between the adjudicators' decision to grant entry clearance and entry clearance being issued.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I will write to the hon. Member.

Convictions (Safety)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to receive the report of the Essex constabulary into the safety of the convictions of Sam Kulasingham and Prem Siuchasinghan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Essex police are actively proceeding with their inquiries into this case, but the extent of their remaining inquiries make it difficult, at this stage, to give a precise timing for its conclusions.

Public Assemblies

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will conduct an urgent review of the powers available to the police to prevent assemblies such as that at Castlemorton common taking place where they are a threat to public order, safety and health and consider bringing forward measures, similar to those affecting marches, to enable chief constables to ban such events if unauthorised.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have called for a full report from the chief constable of West Mercia on the policing of the event at Castlemorton. Senior officials will very shortly be considering with chief constables the powers available to the police service, the intelligence and liaison arrangements between forces and their tactics for handling such large gatherings.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are employed in C3 division of the Home Office.

Mr. Jack: On 1 June 1992, a total of 55 staff were employed in C3 division.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Royal Parks

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what are the hours of opening for each of the royal parks; and what are the hours for their lighting.

Mr. Key: The information is as follows:

Hours of opening and closing

Park	*Opening*	*Closing*
Hyde Park	05.00 am	Midnight
Kensington Gardens	05.00 am	Dusk
St. James's Park	Open always	
Green Park	Open always	
Regents Park (except Queen Mary Gardens)	05.00 am	Dusk

Park	Opening	Closing
Queen Mary Gardens	07.00 am	Dusk
Primrose Hill	Open always	
Greenwich Park		
Pedestrian Gates	05.00 am	18.00 pm or Dusk, whichever is later
Traffic Gates	05.45 am	
Bushy Park		
Pedestrian Gates	Open always	
Traffic Gates	06.00 am	Midnight
Richmond Park		
Pedestrian Gates	Open always	
Traffic Gates	November–February 07.30 am	Dusk
	March–October 07.00 am	Dusk

Lighting up hours

Park	Period	Times
Hyde Park		
Kensington Gardens	Summer	20.45pm–Midnight
St. James's Park		
Green Park	Winter	Standard lighting up times
Regent's Park including Primrose Hill		
Greenwich Park		
Richmond Park	No lighting in parks	
Bushy Park		

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the total cost of providing street and path lighting in royal parks for each of the last five years; and how many employees are engaged in providing and maintaining this service.

Mr. Key: The total cost for the provision of street and path lighting was £221,000 in 1990-91 and £271,000 in 1991-92. Separate records of expenditure on these services were not kept for previous years.

The royal parks do not directly employ any staff to carry out these services.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will set out the cost of maintaining the railings around the royal parks for each of the last five years.

Mr. Key: The total cost of maintaining and repairing the railings and gates around the royal parks was £86,000 in 1990-91 and £252,000 in 1991-92. Separate records of expenditure on these items were not kept for previous years.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the progress of contracting ground maintenance in the royal parks and the royal parks police force and the effects on cost and efficiency.

Mr. Key: Contracts for the gardening and landscape maintenance work and for urgent tree work have all been let and came into operation on 1 March 1992. The nursery contract will come into effect on 4 July. An additional contract for tree maintenance will be awarded shortly. None of the new arrangements affect the royal parks constabulary.

The primary objective of contracting out was to maintain and improve standards both in the royal parks and in the industry and I am confident that this will be achieved. Current projections are for an actual cost saving through contracting out of £200,000 in 1992-93.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many commercially sponsored litter bins and park benches there are in the royal parks; and what is his estimate of the consequent cost saving.

Mr. Key: None.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the direct labour departments by number of employees for each royal park and depot and list their functions.

Mr. Key: The details are as follows:

Park	Number Employed	Function
Central Parks[1]	14	Plant production in the Hyde Park nursery[2]
Regents Park	4	Plant production in the nursery[2]
Greenwich Park	6	Plant production in the nursery[2]
Richmond Park	2	Gamekeeping duties
Bushy Park	1	Gamekeeping duties

[1] Central Parks comprise—Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, St. James's Park and the Green Park.

[2] Until 3 July 1992 when redundancy notices take effect. Plants will subsequently be purchased from a contractor.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has for reforestation of royal parks.

Mr. Key: The royal parks tree replanting programme is based on the traditional tree planting patterns in each park.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the total cost for each of the last five years of providing *(a)* refuse and litter bins and *(b)* park benches and their maintenance in royal parks.

Mr. Key: The details are as follows:

Year	Bins £	Benches £
1987-88	51,000	Nil
1988-89	138,900	Nil
1989-90	46,900	Nil
1990-91	85,000	16,500
1991-92	81,300	3,900

Records of park bench maintenance costs have not been kept separately.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the total income earned in royal parks for each of the last five years by *(a)* ice cream refreshment concessions, *(b)* deck chair concessions and *(c)* boating lake concessions.

Mr. Key: The figures are:

Concession	Year ending 31 March 1988 £000	Year ending 31 March 1989 £000	Year ending 31 March 1990 £000	Year ending 31 March 1991 £000	Year ending 31 March 1992 £000
Catering[1]	238·9	273·1	361·7	473·2	412·81
Boating	31·0	34·3	41·5	37·5	75·00
Deck chairs	20·6	24·6	7·3	23·5	23·30

[1] Total catering concession income. Separate records of income relating to ice cream sales are not kept.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when management consultants last looked at the royal parks management structure.

Mr. Key: 1985.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many park keepers in royal parks are provided by private contractors.

Mr. Key: This is a matter for the contractors. The numbers fluctuate with the amount of work required.

Departmental Library

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on arrangements made to establish a new library for his Department.

Mr. Key: My Department is actively working towards setting up the full range of services necessary to a department of state. Divisions are currently using the library facilities provided by their former parent Departments, but it is likely to be the case that we will be instituting our own library services in due course. Full consideration will be given to the provision of these services and it may be that there will be scope for contracting them out.

TRANSPORT

VAT

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effect of the imposition of value added tax on passenger transport; and what would be the increase in *(a)* fares or *(b)* public sector grant in a full year to recover the net cost of value added tax charged at a rate of (i) 15 per cent. and (ii) 17·5 per cent.

Mr. Freeman: I have made no detailed assessment of the effects of the imposition of value added tax on passenger transport. Agreement reached by Finance Ministers enables us to retain our existing zero rates.

Antares

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the findings of the inquiry into the sinking of the vessel Antares from Carradale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The report of the chief inspector of marine accidents into the collision between the fishing vessel Antares and HMS Trenchant is expected to be published by HMSO on 9 July 1992.

British Rail (Finance)

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the level of Government financial support for British Rail provided in *(a)* million pounds, *(b)* the amount needed to equal the 1979 allocation in real terms and *(c)* the percentage excess or shortfall compared to the 1979 allocation in real terms; and if he will provide a breakdown by the following (i) public sector obligation, (ii) external financing limit and (iii) external financing requirement for each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail's external financing limit—EFL—for 1992-93 has been set at £2,096 million. British Rail's external financing requirement—EFR—for 1979 was £1,735 million in 1992-93 prices. British Rail's EFL for 1992-93 therefore shows an increase of 21 per cent. over the figure for 1979 in real terms.

The annual breakdown by public service obligation, EFL and EFR is shown in the table.

Government financial support for British Rail 1979 to 1992-93

£ million in 1992-93 prices

	Public service obligation grant	External finance limit	External finance requirement
1979	1,176	1,735	1,737
1980	1,180	1,620	1,620
1981	1,398	1,720	1,795
1982	1,425	1,611	1,481
1983	1,422	1,590	1,352
[1]1984-85	1,692	1,477	1,660
1985-86	1,233	1,382	1,370
1986-87	1,004	1,141	1,131
1987-88	1,051	1,038	816
1988-89	688	971	482
1989-90	603	768	814
1990-91	669	781	1,134
1991-92	941	1,591	1,511
[2]1992-93	1,040	2,096	n/a

[1] 1984-85 was a 15-month year.
[2] The figure for public service obligation grant for 1992-93 is a ceiling.

Rail Freight

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is the level of freight carried by rail expressed *(a)* in million tonnes and *(b)* as a percentage of total freight for (i) each of the EC member states, (ii) Sweden and (iii) Norway and Finland for each year since 1979;

(2) what is the total amount of freight carried by British Rail expressed in million tonnes; and if he will provide a breakdown by *(a)* coal and coke, *(b)* iron and steel, *(c)* oil and chemicals, (d) building and construction, *(e)* freightliner and *(f)* other traffic for each of the years since 1979;

(3) what is the proportion of railway operating costs which are met from *(a)* passenger and *(b)* freight revenue

expressed in (i) cash terms and (ii) as a percentage of total operating costs for each of the EC member states, Sweden, Norway and Finland.

Mr. Freeman: Such data as are available are contained in the following publications:

Transport Statistics Great Britain (TSGB) 1991: Table 6·9;

Transport Statistics Report. International Comparisons of Transport Statistics 1970-1988 Part 1: Intermodal—Annex, Table B;

TSGB 1979-1989 and TSGB 1991—Table 3.4;

International Railway Statistics 1990: Table 72.

All these publications are available in the Library.

Rail Electrification

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of *(a)* rail routes and *(b)* running tracks are electrified in the following (i) Scotland, (ii) England, (iii) Wales, (iv) Northern Ireland, (v) each of the EC member states, (vi) Sweden, (vii) Norway and (viii) Finland.

Mr. Freeman: Information regarding the electrification of running tracks is not available. The percentage of rail routes electrified appears in the table:

Percentage of rail routes electrified—1989

	Per cent.
Scotland	23
England	33
Wales	0
Northern Ireland	0
Belgium	65
Denmark	10
France	36
Germany	38
Greece	0
Italy	59
Luxembourg	72
Netherlands	69
Portugal	15
Republic of Ireland	2
Spain	51
Sweden	63
Norway	60
Finland	28

Sources:
British Rail.
Northern Ireland Railways Co. Ltd.
Transport Statistics Great Britain.
UIC Statistics 1989.

Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the 10th anniversary of the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Norris: I am pleased to say that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State supported this application and has agreed to open the exhibition on Monday 29 June.

Light Rail Schemes

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the funding of future light rail schemes.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the funding of future light rail schemes.

Mr. MacGregor: Light rail schemes are assessed for grant in accordance with the procedures and criteria set out in circular 3/89. Credit approvals are provided if required for the balance of resources, taking account of any contribution from the private sector. The fact that a scheme has qualified for funding does not however mean that the resources will be available. The Government are determined to keep tight control over public expenditure. We have funded the £135 million Manchester Metro, and are currently funding the £230 million South Yorkshire Supertram but it will not be possible to provide funds for construction of line one of the Midland Metro in the current spending round. However, we intend to continue supporting measures taken by local authorities to improve bus services, including traffic management measures. Such measures involve less call for capital expenditure and do have an immediate benefit for public transport. We have invited local authorities to submit further schemes for resource allocation next year.

Helicopter Sale

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department authorised the sale of British Airways helicopters to Robert Maxwell; and what conditions were applied.

Mr. Norris: The sale did not require the Secretary of State's approval or authorisation.

PRIME MINISTER

Ministerial Advisers

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the special advisers appointed to Government Ministers in this Parliament and their previous occupations.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

The names and pre-election occupations of special advisers appointed in this Parliament are as follows:

Name	*Previous occupation*
K. Adams	Special Adviser
J. S. Bercow	Sallingbury Casey
E. Bickham	Special Adviser
T. Burke	Special Adviser
J. Caine	Special Adviser
D. W. D. Cameron	Conservative Central Office
Dr. E. Cottrell	Conservative Central Office
Sir P. Cradock	Special Adviser
Mr. Fraser	Special Adviser
Sir C. Foster	Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte
C. M. Grantham	Special Adviser
D. Green	Television Presenter
M. S. Hole	Special Adviser
Mrs. S. Hogg	Special Adviser
C. Hopson	Communications Consultant
A. Kemp	Special Adviser
Mrs. T. Keswick	Special Adviser
Mrs. E. Laing	Special Adviser
G. Mackay	Special Adviser
R. Marsh	Special Adviser
J. Mayhew	Special Adviser
M. McManus	Conservative Central Office
P. J. E. Miller	Special Adviser
D. Poole	James Capel
Mrs. K. Ramsay	Special Adviser
Dr. W. Robinson	Special Adviser
P. Rock	Conservative Central Office
A. Rosling	Special Adviser
D. Ruffley	Special Adviser

Name	Previous occupation
I. Stewart	Special Adviser
Lady Strathnaver	Special Adviser
N. True	Special Adviser
I. R. Wilton	Special Adviser
A. Young	Special Adviser

Honours List

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Prime Minister what is his policy on the confidentiality of proposed recommendations by him for honours until they are formally announced; what steps are taken when such confidence is breached; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister treats such recommendations in strict confidence until they are announced and asks others to treat them similarly.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Drift Net Fishing

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent discussions his Department has had with the National Rivers Authority concerning the phasing out of the north-east drift net fishery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Following the report to Parliament on 17 October prepared by my right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Scotland, the National Rivers Authority was asked how the regulation of this fishery could be changed, inter alia, to phase out the drift net fisheries. Officials have remained in close touch with the NRA. We expect to receive the NRA's response in the summer.

Whaling

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps have been taken to instigate a permanent ban on commercial whaling.

Mr. Curry: A moratorium on commercial whaling has been agreed by the International Whaling Commission and has operated since 1985. The United Kingdom strongly supports the moratorium. Its future will be a key issue for discussion at the commission's 44th annual meeting in Glasgow this month.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to promote at the International Whaling Commission meeting in Glasgow in June *(a)* a total and permanent ban on commercial whaling and *(b)* the declaration of Antartic waters as a whale sanctuary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: A moratorium on commercial whaling, promoted by the IWC, has operated since 1985. The moratorium has been supported by the United Kingdom which has banned whaling within British fishery limits since 1976. A proposal to establish a whale sanctuary in the southern hemisphere, south of 40°S, has been put forward by the French Government for discussion at the next IWC meeting. Details of this proposal have only just been received and will require careful study. The proposals address a number of questions to the International Whaling Commission's scientific committee whose advice we shall also need to evaluate.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to press the European Commission to draw up proposals for a permanent ban on whaling in EC waters.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 4 June, *Official Report*, column *642*.

Milk Marketing

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to respond to the milk marketing board's proposals to turn itself into a single voluntary co-operative with pooled prices.

Mr. Curry: The Government have welcomed the board's proposals which represent a major step forward, and is currently considering them, together with equivalent proposals from the other four United Kingdom boards. We intend to introduce legislation this season to facilitate the conversion of the boards into non-statutory organisations.

Industrial Fishing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has for phasing out industrial fishing; and whether he will make it his policy for decomissioning grants to be concentrated on this area to reduce effort.

Mr. Curry: There is as yet insufficient evidence to win an argument in the Council of Ministers that industrial fishing harms human consumption fisheries and should be phased out. In the United Kingdom industrial fishery the Shetland sandeel fishery was closed in 1990 and remains shut. Access to the west coast of Scotland sandeel fishery is restricted by licence. The bycatch of human consumption species in industrial fisheries is considerably smaller than the discards of juvenile fish from the white fish fisheries. Very few United Kingdom vessels are involved in industrial fishing. Decommissioning funds will be used to target effort in order to maximise the value for money of the public funds available. All applications for decommissioning grants will be evaluated using the same criteria. Decommissioning funds will be used to target effort in order to maximise the value for money of the public funds available. All applications for decommissioning grants will be evaluated using the same criteria.

Sheep Scab

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is now in a position to make an announcement about the future of sheep scab controls.

Mr. Soames: Sheep scab is a disease which can be readily controlled at the individual farm level and sheep farmers are well aware of the preventative measures and procedures needed to deal with the disease in their flocks. Compulsory national dipping arrangements required all

flocks to be dipped, whether or not infected or at risk of infection. In 1991 the disease was recorded by the State Veterinary Service in 116 flocks out of 105,000 sheep holdings in Great Britain.

The Government decided that responsibility for action to deal with sheep scab should rest with farmers. The dipping of sheep will no longer be compulsory and shortly legislation will be put before Parliament proposing that the disease will cease to be notifiable or subject to statutory control measures when it is discovered.

Legislation is already in place to protect the welfare of animals. We shall not hesitate to press for the prosecution of those who do not deal promptly and satisfactorily with outbreaks of sheep scab in their flocks. Field staff of the State Veterinary Service will, as in other cases where the welfare of animals may be at risk, look for evidence of sheep scab during their visits to markets and farms and will investigate all cases reported to them, where there is a potential welfare problem. Every sheep farmer will be contacted, in writing, to remind farmers of their responsibilities for controlling sheep scab and of the procedures they should follow should their flocks become infected.

Relocation

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when an announcement will be made on the choice of the site in York to which 600 headquarters posts from his Department will be relocating in 1994.

Mr. Gummer: I hope to make an announcement in due course.

CAP Reform

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what effect he expects the recent agreement on CAP reform to have on the price, over the next three years, of *(a)* 1lb of bacon, *(b)* a standard loaf and *(c)* ¼lb of butter.

Mr. Curry: It is not possible to give precise estimates. The reform process will be spread over a number of years, and during this period retail food prices will be affected by a number of factors. However, at the end of the reform period the retail food price index could be some 2 per cent. lower on average than it would otherwise have been.

Mail Order Foods

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what response he has made to the Mail Order Fine Food Association's "Proposals for Improving Safety Standards in Mail Order Foods", a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I have recently written to the Mail Order Fine Foods Association outlining my response to that organisation's paper entitled "Proposals for Improving Safety Standards in Mail Order Foods". I welcome the formation of the association and applaud its primary objective of introducing and maintaining improved standards of food quality and hygiene throughout the mail order trade. Moreover, the association's initiative in drawing up a code of good hygiene practice for the mail order food industry is to be commended. Given the importance of temperature control and of scrupulous attention to hygiene at the production and packing stages of all foods, I shall be interested to follow the progress of this code and the extent to which, though voluntary, it commands general acceptance in the mail order sector.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 22 May, *Official Report*, columns *322-23*, if he will list the locations of incinerators approved by his Ministry for the disposal of BSE cows; and what is the weekly capacity for each one.

Mr. Gummer: The Ministry uses eight incineration plants in England and Wales for the incineration of suspect BSE carcases. They are located in Gloucestershire, Hertfordshire, Somerset, Nottinghamshire, Avon, Cornwall, Dyfed and Clywd. One of these is at a Ministry veterinary investigation centre located in Sutton Bonington, Nottinghamshire and has the capacity to incinerate 22 carcases per week. The others are privately owned and operate on a commercial basis. The Ministry cannot therefore disclose details, such as individual capacity, for these plants.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will convene a working party of independent scientists to produce an updated report on bovine spongiform encephalopathy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I did so in 1990 and this committee, chaired by Dr. Tyrrell, has produced advice to Ministers on a number of occasions. In each case the recommendations have been made public and implemented in full.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will show the number of confirmed cases of BSE in each county of England and Wales from May.

Mr. Soames: The number of cases confirmed for England and Wales from 1 May 1992 to 29 May 1992 is as follows. These cases will have a date of clinical onset of disease, and indeed date of report, before 1 May.

County	*Confirmed cases*
England	
Avon	46
Bedfordshire	8
Berkshire	10
Buckinghamshire	23
Cambridgeshire	10
Cheshire	176
Cleveland	4
Cornwall	258
Cumbria	103
Derbyshire	109
Devon	343
Dorset	164
Durham	19
Essex	6
Gloucestershire	49
Hampshire	42
Hereford and Worcestershire	56
Hertfordshire	5
Humberside	15
Isle of Wight	11
Kent	38
Lancashire	103
Leicestershire	58

County	Confirmed cases
Lincolnshire	11
London	3
Manchester	0
Merseyside	2
Norfolk	75
Northamptonshire	24
Northumberland	34
Nottinghamshire	24
Oxfordshire	42
Shropshire	81
Somerset	209
Staffordshire	95
Suffolk	27
Surrey	22
Susex, East	24
Sussex, West	52
Tyne and Wear	1
Warwickshire	30
West Midlands	3
Wiltshire	104
Yorks, North	152
Yorks, South	6
Yorks, West	24
Wales	
Clwyd	52
Dyfed	199
Glamorgan, North	2
Glamorgan, South	11
Glamorgan, West	2
Gwent	21
Gwynedd	14
Powys	59

Myxomatosis Vaccine

Mr. Moate: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when stocks of myxomatosis vaccine for pet rabbits will be exhausted; what assessment he has made of the likely consequences for domestic pets; how this situation has arisen; and if he will take steps to secure immediate production of this vaccine.

Mr. Soames: Discussions between licence holders and the licensing authority are confidential matters on which I am unable to comment under the terms of section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968. I can confirm however that a licence for myxomatosis vaccine was recently surrendered by the licence holder. Information on the stocks available is not held centrally but there will be no further supplies once those currently held by veterinarians have been exhausted.

Informal discussions have taken place with representatives of the veterinary pharmaceutical industry about the possibility that other companies might wish to make applications for a licence but so far no applications have been forthcoming. This is a commercial decision for the companies concerned and will clearly be influenced by the perceived level of demand for such a product.

Any application would need to be considered against the scientific criteria of safety, quality and efficacy as required by the Medicines Act and would be assessed as speedily as possible.

Food (Radioactivity)

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he has taken on the recommendation by the Agriculture Committee that his Department should develop a monitoring system at key food outlets to give an indication of day-to-day levels of radioactivity in major foodstuffs.

Mr. Soames: The Ministry's priority remains the monitoring of sheep at the point of production to ensure that contaminated animals or produce are identified and prevented from entering the food chain.

To supplement these live monitoring arrangements, the Department operates a programme of monitoring at a number of slaughterhouses which take sheep from the Cumbria restricted area. In addition, our terrestrial radioactivity monitoring programme involves the monitoring of milk at dairies covering 27 counties in England and Wales. The results of this monitoring are published regularly and copies are placed in the Libraries of the House.

Also, monitoring programmes for radioactivity in food operated by various bodies have been published in a compendium "Programmes to Monitor Radioactivity in Food: Food Surveillance Paper No. 28, HMSO, 1990". This report gives an indication of the further extensive monitoring of food that currently takes place.

Suckler Cow Premium

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the rate of suckler cow premium for the 1992 scheme year.

Mr. Gummer: At its meeting on 18 to 21 May, the Council of Agriculture Ministers agreed that the Community-funded element of the suckler cow premium for the 1992 scheme year should be 50 ecu—£39·77—per head. There will continue to be provision for an optional national top-up to the Community-funded premium. I expect the Commission to produce a draft implementing regulation shortly. An announcement on the rate of premium to apply in the United Kingdom for the 1992 scheme will be made in due course. In the meantime, I have laid an amendment to the relevant statutory instrument —SI 1992/1210, the Suckler Cow Premium (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 1992—to make it clear that the rates currently set out apply only to applications in respect of the 1991 scheme year.

Meat Inspection

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has now concluded the review of meat inspection charges which he announced on 9 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I am today making available in the Library of the House copies of summary statistics collected by the review team, and of recommendations by the agriculture departments to interested local authorities and members of the meat industry. These are directed at clarifying the basis on which charges are calculated, and enabling co-operation between plant operators and local authorities to facilitate consistent and cost-effective inspection throughout Great Britain. I hope that they will help local authorities discharge their statutory responsibilities efficiently, in the period of transition until the new national meat hygiene service takes over these responsibilities. We wish to thank those local authorities and members of the industry who provided information to the review team.

The Government remain concerned that the EC legislation under which meat inspection charges are required to be levied should be efficient, cost effective and applied on a uniform basis throughout the Community. In the light of the detailed findings of the review, we will be pressing the European Commission to bring forward satisfactory proposals for the revision of these EC arrangements for discussion by the Council of Ministers. This issue has important implications for fair competition in the single market, and we will press for it to be resolved in the forthcoming UK presidency.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Brewing

Mr. Luff: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to review the impact of excise duty on smaller brewers.

Sir John Cope: The position of smaller brewers was considered during the pre-Budget review of indirect taxation, but my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer decided to make no change. However, small brewers should benefit from the forthcoming change in the method of taxing beer. The present wastage allowance, which often does not cover all their production losses, will be abolished, and they will pay duty only on the beer they actually despatch for sale. The Government have no present plans for a further review.

Home Care Services

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the subject of VAT charges on home care services; and if he will place the text of such representations and his reply to them in the Library.

Sir John Cope: Treasury Ministers have received a number of representations about VAT on the provision of domiciliary care. I have arranged for the text of a typical reply to such representations to be placed in the Library of the House.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of gross domestic product manufacturing investment, including leased assets, represented in 1979 and 1991.

Mr. Nelson: Estimates of manufacturing investment and gross domestic product may be obtained from the CSO database accessible through the House of Commons Library.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out for each month the variation of the pound sterling inside or outside the 2½ per cent. and 6 per cent. bands since its entry into the European exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Nelson: Sterling does not participate in the narrow band of the ERM. The table lists the average monthly percentage variation of sterling from its central rates against other ERM currencies since joining the exchange rate mechanism.

Sterling's percentage deviation from its central rates against the other ERM currencies

	Deutschmark	*Dutch Guilder*	*Belgian/ Luxembourg Franc*	*Danish Krone*	*Irish Punt*
October 1990	0·74	0·78	0·54	0·77	0·64
November	−1·07	−0·96	−1·04	−0·58	−0·99
December	−2·40	−2·26	−2·06	−1·38	−1·77
January 1991	−1·10	−1·04	−1·19	−0·16	−0·70
February	−1·40	−1·38	−1·59	−0·54	−0·84
March	−0·65	−0·61	−0·77	−0·02	−0·12
April	1·02	1·01	0·46	1·38	1·17
May	0·47	0·46	−0·21	0·79	0·55
June	−0·36	−0·36	−0·47	0·64	−0·20
July	−0·12	−0·14	−0·32	1·24	0·03
August	−0·48	−0·46	−0·67	0·88	−0·29
September	−0·79	−0·78	−0·92	0·41	−0·58
October	−1·33	−1·32	−1·50	−0·09	−1·15
November	−2·19	−2·17	−2·31	−0·42	−1·88
December	−3·13	−3·11	−3·24	−1·17	−2·58
January 1992	−3·19	−3·23	−3·34	−1·50	−2·58
February	−2·47	−2·58	−2·68	−0·89	−2·10
March	−2·90	−2·99	−3·12	−1·24	−2·49
April	−1·85	−1·94	−2·09	−0·24	−1·36
May	−0·50	−0·59	−0·71	0·74	−0·22

Sterling's percentage deviation from its central rates against the other ERM currencies

	Spanish Peseta	*Portuguese Escudo*	*Italian Lire*	*French Franc*
1990				
October	−2·74	—	0·85	0·59
November	−3·67	—	−0·58	−0·67
December	−4·08	—	−1·64	−1·16
1991				
January	−4·04	—	−0·62	0·18

	Spanish Peseta	Portuguese Escudo	Italian Lire	French Franc
February	−5·11	—	−1·08	0·07
March	−4·95	—	−0·97	0·82
April	−4·07	—	0·04	1·79
May	−4·33	—	−0·34	1·55
June	−4·40	—	−0·99	0·78
July	−3·75	—	−0·59	1·07
August	−4·38	—	−0·57	0·84
September	−4·24	—	−0·85	0·68
October	−4·28	—	−1·39	0·30
November	−4·83	—	−1·53	−0·35
December	−4·88	—	−2·10	−1·30
1992				
January	−5·63	—	−2·47	−1·54
February	−5·74	—	−2·06	−1·02
March	−5·74	—	−2·48	−1·71
April	−4·91	−3·52	−1·22	−1·03
May	−4·30	−4·72	0·10	−0·26

Note:
Sterling joined the exchange rate mechanism on 8 October 1990. The Portuguese Escudo joined the ERM on 6 April 1992.

Malawi

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement outlining Her Majesty's Government's policy on commercial loans to Malawi.

Mr. Nelson: Her Majesty's Government's policy on commercial bank loans to Malawi is that such loans are a matter to be decided by the banks and the Government of Malawi.

Profit-related Pay

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many employees participated in live registered profit-related pay schemes in the last period for which figures are available; how many schemes are in operation; and what is the estimated total value of those schemes.

Mr. Dorrell: There were 736,000 participating employees in 2,895 live registered profit-related pay schemes at the end of April 1992. On the basis of the latest information provided by participating employers, the total annual value of the distributable profit-related pay pool for these schemes is tentatively estimated at about £500 million.

Employee Share Options

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many employees have received shares under qualifying employee share option trusts; and what is the current total value of shares in such trusts.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue may not learn of the establishment of employee share ownership trusts of the kind defined in the Finance Act 1989 until claims for the tax relief provided by the legislation are received. Such claims may be made up to two years after the end of the period of account in which the relevant contributions are made. A return seeking information on the operation of the trust will not be sent out for completion until confirmation that a claim has been allowed has been received centrally. No such confirmations have yet been received.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many new lettings from investments under the business expansion scheme in 1990-91 there were in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* north-west England and *(c)* St. Helens; and what percentage these figures represent of (i) all privately rented property and (ii) all rented property.

Mr. Dorrell: Provisional estimates for new lettings from investments under the business expansion scheme in 1990-91 are as follows. Separate figures for St. Helens could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

New lettings

		As a percentage of:	
	Total number	All privately rented property per cent.	All rented property per cent.
North West England	600	0·40	0·07
United Kingdom	5,300	0·31	0·07

Maastricht Treaty

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the progress made towards achieving the economic objectives listed in article 109 of the EC treaty as proposed in the Maastricht treaty.

Sir John Cope: While the United Kingdom has reserved the right to choose whether or not to participate in the final stage of EMU the Government's policies are designed to ensure that the United Kingdom meets the convergence criteria as listed in article 109 of the Maastricht treaty.

The Government are committed to membership of the exchange rate mechanism and will in due course move to narrow bands at the current central parity of DM2·95. Maintaining sterling within its ERM bands will ensure that United Kingdom inflation will move progressively into line with the best inflation performance of the ERM countries. Long-term interest rates can also be expected to converge with the best ERM countries' performance. Fiscal policy is designed to avoid running deficits that might be judged excessive.

Benefits and Expenses

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the threshold on P11Ds was last increased; and what representations he has had to increase them.

Mr. Dorrell: The earnings threshold above which employers must report employees' benefits and expenses payments to the Inland Revenue on form P11D was last increased, to £8,500, from 1979-80. A number of representations have been received suggesting an increase in the P11D threshold.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the estimated number of tax-payers above the current threshold for P11Ds and below the current threshold for the last available figures.

Mr. Dorrell: It is estimated that in 1992-93 there are some 15·4 million tax-paying employees earning above the £8,500 P11D threshold. There are also 0·8 million tax-paying directors who are subject to the special provisions for taxation of benefits-in-kind whatever the level of their earnings. There are 3·1 million tax-paying employees earning less than the P11D threshold.

Pay and File

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what date he expects to bring into effect pay and file.

Mr. Dorrell: On present plans pay and file will start on 1 October 1993. The new rules will apply to accounting periods ending on or after that date.

Wakefield Valuation Office

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, column *400*, why neither the Members with constituencies affected, nor the local authority concerned, were consulted prior to or informed subsequent to the closure of the Wakefield valuation office.

Mr. Dorrell: The former Wakefield valuation office covered the local authorities of City of Wakefield metropolitan district council and Barnsley metropolitan borough council. The end of domestic rating caused a reduction of about one fifth of the work of the VO and a reduced network was necessary in order to protect costs.

Both authorities were advised in advance of the closure and arrangements made for the transfer of work to Doncaster valuation office with effect from 30 September 1991.

While the respective Members of Parliament were not directly informed of the closure, a copy of the "Valuation Office Address Book", held in the House of Commons Library, was updated in October 1991 and indicated the transfer of the above local authorities to the Doncaster valuation office.

Financial Services

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the transfer of responsibility for financial services from the Department of Trade and Industry to the Treasury.

Mr. Lamont: Responsibility for financial services was transferred to the Treasury on 7 June by the Transfer of Functions (Financial Services) Order 1992 which was laid before Parliament on 5 June.

The transfer involves the functions and staff of the DTI's financial services division. In essence, these cover responsibility for policy and legislation, and overseeing regulation, in the areas of investment business, collective investment schemes, the issue of securities to the public and investor protection.

The functions transferred include responsibility for the regulatory system under the Financial Services Act 1986 and oversight of the Securities and Investments Board, the Companies Securities (Insider Dealing) Act 1985, and part VII—(financial markets and insolvency)—and part IX—TAURUS—of the Companies Act 1989; EC directives in the financial services sector, (including the draft investment services and capital adequacy directives); arrangements with overseas regulators for exchanging information; encouraging international liberalisation in financial services through the general agreement on tariffs and trade and the organisation for economic co-operation and development; and for litigation to recover the cost of the Government's ex gratia payments scheme to Barlow Clowes investors.

The DTI will continue to be responsible for the generality of company law; insolvency matters including the disqualification of directors; investigations and prosecutions under the Financial Services, Insolvency and Companies Acts; and for prudential supervision of insurance undertakings, EC insurance directives, insurance interests in the OECD and GATT, and for general questions affecting the insurance industry.

Banking and financial services have become increasingly closely linked, at home and abroad, and this will now be reflected by bringing policy responsibility together in a single Department. No changes are proposed in the way financial services are regulated as a result of the transfer.

ENVIRONMENT

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total sum paid out in fees by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Howard: Information relating to the financial years between 1979-80 and 1984-85 inclusive is not readily available and cannot be obtained without disproportionate cost. Following is the information relating to the remaining financial years:

	£ million
1985-86	4·3
1986-87	5·0
1987-88	5·3
1988-89	9·5
1989-90	16·3
1990-91	10·2
1991-92	[1]10·7
1992-93	[2]10·6

[1] Provisional outturn.
[2] Provisional budget. Excludes PSA Services, the budget for which has yet to be fixed.

Waltham Forest HAT

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what capital allocations will be made to the Waltham Forest housing action trust; and by what mechanisms capital spending by the trust will be determined and controlled.

Mr. Baldry: The Waltham Forest housing action trust will be provided with sufficient funding to cover the cost of capital expenditure on its agreed programme. Until its first corporate plan has been produced and agreed with the Department no overall allocation can be made and funding will be provided on a monthly basis against need. In common with other non-departmental public bodies the trust will be financially responsible via its accounting officer acting in accordance with a financial memorandum, management statement and corporate plan, and subject to external audit.

Smoke Alarms

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he will issue a circular to local authorities to encourage them to introduce smoke alarms into homes for elderly people;

(2) whether he will introduce legislation to require local authorities to install smoke alarms in all local authority and housing association homes occupied by pensioners.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has no plans to do so, but building regulations now call for the installation of smoke detectors in new dwellings, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health is responsible for legislation on types of accommodation for elderly people which, among other things, provides for fire precautions.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department has expended on the promotion or installation of smoke alarms in homes for elderly people in each of the last five years for which records are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

Since 1987 the Home Office has conducted a regional and national television advertising campaign promoting smoke alarms. The campaign has sought to increase ownership among all households in England and Wales. In 1990-91 and 1991-92 the Home Office targeted its national television advertising campaign primarily at elderly people.

Four million copies of leaflets promoting smoke alarms have been issued by the Home Office. In addition, a leaflet and video promoting general fire safety for elderly people also encourage the installation of smoke alarms.

Costs cannot be apportioned to specific target groups.

There is legislation in place in respect of types of accommodation housing elderly people which, among other things, makes provision for fire precautions. Such legislation is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Opencast Mining

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 22 May, *Official Report*, column *269*, further to 0273/92/93/(27), if he will list those organisations and individuals who have contributed to his consultation exercise relating to minerals planning guidance 3 as it affects opencast coal mining operators.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has received 58 responses to the consultation exercise. I am placing a list of those who have responded in the Library of the House.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those planning decisions relating to opencast mining applications which have been called in by his Department in each of the last five years for the Secretary of State's ruling; and, in each case, whether permission was given or refused, or whether the case has still to be determined.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has called in one planning decision relating to an opencast mining application in the last five years. The application was by the British Coal Corporation for the Smotherfly—revised—opencast coal site in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. It was called in on 8 December 1987, and permission for the development was given on 17 March 1989.

Canary Wharf

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary for the Environment if it is a prerequisite for accepting any private sector bid for the Canary Wharf project for there to be an agreement from the firm to give financial assistance to the Jubilee line extension.

Mr. Redwood: The terms on which Canary Wharf may be offered for sale are entirely a matter for the administrator appointed to manage Olympia and York's affairs in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sheldon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, when considering any possible move to Canary Wharf he will take into account the cost of London weighting allowance and compare total costs of such a move to those of dispersing to other regions of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Howard: The 2,000 posts in my Department which are to move to docklands, subject to securing accommodation on suitable terms, need to remain within London because they need to have regular contacts with Ministers. The question of the comparative costs of dispersal to other parts of the United Kingdom does not therefore arise. I shall, however, continue to look for further opportunities to relocate posts to other parts of the country, bearing in mind the point which the right hon. Member makes.

Single Homeless

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance his Department will make available over the next two years to agencies which provide shelter to single homeless people in *(a)* the north-west of England and *(b)* St. Helens.

Mr. Baldry: For 1992-93 the Department has offered financial assistance under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 to 17 voluntary organisations in north-west England, all of which provide direct practical help to homeless people in finding and keeping suitable accommodation. One organisation, Merseyside accommodation project, is receiving support for its work in St. Helens. Funding for future years is subject to negotiation.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans his Department has for national assessment of direct access accommodation available to single homeless people.

Mr. Baldry: None.

Toxic Waste Plant (Teesside)

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be in a position to announce his decision on the planning application to construct a toxic waste plant at Howdon on Tyneside; and what account he will take of the strength of public opposition to the proposal in reaching his decision.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. and learned Friend will issue his decision on the Howdon and linked incinerator inquiries on Teesside as soon as it is practicable to do so.

In reaching his decision, my right hon. Friend will take into account all the representations made about the proposal.

Surrey

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if it remains his policy that the part of Surrey between the M25 and the old Greater London boundary should remain part of Surrey not London.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Local Government Boundary Commission has been looking at the local government boundary in this area. Its final proposals for changing the boundaries between Bromley/Tandridge, Croydon/Tandridge, Croydon/Reigate and Banstead and Richmond/Elmbridge/Spelthorne are presently being considered by the Secretary of State. The commission is still examining the remainder of the Surrey/London boundary and will report in due course.

Planning Appeal, Southport

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to determine planning appeal number T/APP/M4320/A/91/189223/P8, relating to 93/93A High Park road, Southport; when the appeal was first submitted; and when the appeal was submitted for re-determination; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: This is a matter for the Planning Inspectorate Agency and I have asked the chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to review the system of standard spending assessments for the financing of local government in 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Discussions with the local authority associations about a few possible methodological changes to SSAs for 1993-94 have been under way since February.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the operation of section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Mr. Redwood: Councillors who are two or more months in arrears with payment of their community charge or council tax are required by section 106 to declare the fact and to abstain from voting on matters concerning charge or tax.

Compliance with the law is the responsibility of individual councillors.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total level of revenue expenditure by local authorities in 1991-92.

Mr. Redwood: Total net revenue expenditure by English local authorities in 1991-92 is estimated to have been £36·4 billion.

Buying Agency

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that the Buying Agency does not discriminate against British suppliers or operate restrictive practices in its trading activities.

Mr. Baldry: The Buying Agency—TBA—is a public procurement organisation which is bound by the EC supplies directive and the GATT agreement on Government procurement. The Buying Agency has no policies which could be interpreted as restrictive practices.

Relocation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that central London weighting will continue to apply in full to staff relocated in docklands and whether allowances will be made for longer travelling time.

Mr. Howard: I have assured staff in my Department that I am committed to securing the best terms available on transfer to docklands, but details have yet to be settled. Two of the properties under consideration—Harbour Exchange and Canary Wharf—are in any case within the inner-London weighting area.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has made of employment opportunities for local people in the east end arising from relocation of his staff to docklands.

Mr. Howard: Through the normal process of staff turnover, substantial opportunities will in due course arise for employment in my department in docklands, for which local people will be encouraged to apply. There will also be an indirect benefit to the economy of the area from the needs of 2,000 extra workers.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response the trade unions have made to him arising from his propoals to relocate staff in docklands.

Mr. Howard: I have received no response from the trades unions to my announcement in the House on 2 June. The First Division Association had already written to me reporting a conference resolution on the matter. In addition, my officials have had a number of discussions with union representatives.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many civil servants have been taken on visits to docklands in connection with possible relocation to that area; and what hospitality was received.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 4 June 1992]:* Staff responsible for accommodation have made a number of visits to docklands in connection with possible relocation to the area. In addition, there has been one organised visit for a small number of senior staff. Hospitality received has been in accordance with the normal rules.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many civil servants in his Department he is considering for relocation from headquarter buildings; and if he will list the areas currently under consideration for relocation.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 4 June 1992]:* As I said in reply to a private notice question from the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) on 2 June, I have decided that some 2,000 civil servants from my Department will move to docklands, provided that we can secure fully commercial terms giving value for money to the taxpayer. The areas under consideration for relocation are Harbour Exchange, Isle of Dogs, Canary Wharf, Isle of Dogs, and East India dock, Leamouth.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have taken place with the trades unions in respect of relocation of civil servants from his Department's headquarters buildings.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 4 June 1992]:* Early discussions with the departmental trade union side—DTUS—were offered immediately following the announcement by my predecessor on 6 February that the Department's headquarters building at 2 Marsham street was to be demolished, and that options for relocating staff elsewhere in London—particularly docklands—were to be examined. Following a full discussion with the DTUS on 25 March, a sub-committee of the departmental Whitley council was established to deal exclusively with relocation matters. To date, three meetings of the sub-committee have been held. The staff of the Department are also being kept informed of developments on relocation matters through a series of relocation bulletins and other briefing material.

Tenants Incentive Scheme

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give *(a)* the total number of completed transfers under the tenants incentive scheme completed to date and *(b)* the total amount of money paid out to date under the scheme.

Mr. Baldry: Since its introduction in July 1990, the Housing Corporation's tenants incentive scheme has helped more than 4,800 housing association tenants move out into homes of their own with grants totalling more than £60 million.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total amount of money allocated to the Housing Corporation for the tenants incentive scheme since its inception.

Mr. Baldry: A total of £110 million, including £44 million for the current financial year, has been allocated to the tenants incentive scheme in the Housing Corporation's approved development programme in the three years since its inception.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Pickles: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the consultation paper on compulsory competitive tendering for housing management and the research on that subject carried out by consultants; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: As part of the citizens charter initiative, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have today arranged for the following documents to be placed in the Library of the House: "Competing for Quality in Housing", a consultation paper on compulsory competitive tendering for Housing Management; and "The Scope for Competitive Tendering of Housing Management", a study carried out by consultants for our Departments and for the Scottish Office. Copies of these documents have been sent to all district housing authorities in England and Wales, and to a variety of housing organisations and other interested parties. The paper provides for a consultation period of over three months.

Mundic Concrete

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 19 May, to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith), *Official Report*, column *70*, if he will make a further statement on decisions taken on mundic concrete following the 6 April meeting.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 5 June 1992]:* Following the 6 April meeting, technical experts met in Cornwall on 28 April and reached agreement on screening tests for distinguishing mundic material. Work continues on finalising the sampling procedures for identifying harmful aggregates. It is expected that guidance notes covering these matters will be published later this year. It is hoped that the information and guidance in these notes will assist in reducing the number of blighted properties.

London Docklands

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been expended by his Department in the London Docklands development corporation area from the date of its inception until the end of the last financial year.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 4 June 1992]:* To the end of 1991-92, the total grant in aid paid to the London Docklands development corporation was £1,349 million. Further resources of £11 million have been made available through the Department's estate action programme to support local authority housing schemes in docklands.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now publish the terms of the master building agreement between the London Docklands development corporation and Olympia and York.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 4 June 1992]:* No. The document contains information which is a matter of commercial confidence between the signatories.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

International Fund for Agricultural Development

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current status of negotiations on the International Fund for Agricultural Development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Discussions on the fourth replenishment of IFAD's resources began in Qatar in April and will continue in Rome in July. The United Kingdom will work with others for a successful outcome to these negotiations.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Ministerial Engagements

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list his public engagements for Monday 11 May.

Mr. Heseltine: I had no public engagements on that day. This enabled me to pay a private visit to the garden festival at Ebbw Vale which I much enjoyed.

RECHAR

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales have been given funds from the RECHAR programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) on 22 May, 1992 *Official Report*, column *333*.

Maxwell Assets

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will use his powers under the Financial Services Act 1986 to trace and recover Maxwell pension fund moneys and Maxwell family assets which have been removed from United Kingdom control to Liechtenstein control.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Financial Services Act 1986 does not provide powers to trace or enforce the recovery of assets outside the United Kingdom.

Oil Exploration

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many licences have been issued for oil exploration off the Isle of Wight that have not found commercial oil deposits.

Mr. Eggar: Six licences have been issued giving rights to explore for oil and gas in the area off the Isle of Wight. Significant discoveries, which may prove to be commercial, have been made under two of these licences. No discoveries have yet been made on the four other licences: exploration is at a very early stage in two of these.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the policy for issuing licences in an environmentally sensitive area where no deposits have been previously discovered.

Mr. Eggar: Before offering any area for licence, my Department consults a range of Government Departments and other interested parties, including fishery associations and the Joint Nature Conservancy Council. As a result of these consultations, some areas may not be released for licensing. Where licences are offered, conditions may be attached to protect environmental or other interests; these may restrict the timing and location of exploration activities. Licensees may also be required to consult local authorities and other relevant bodies before undertaking operations under their licence. Applicants for licences must also satisfy my Department that they are capable of carrying out their planned exploration programme with due regard to environmental concerns.

Concessionary Coal Allowance

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future of retired miners' concessionary coal allowances following privatisation of the mining industry and on the arrangements that are available to retired miners who wish to convert to other forms of heating.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) on 2 June, *Official Report*, column *493*.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will describe the work that he has undertaken following the publication of the report by the interdepartmental party into the reduction of the bureaucratic burden of registration under the Data Protection Act 1984; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The interdepartmental group which reviewed the operation of the Data Protection Act 1984 disbanded when it had presented its report. Further action must necessarily await the outcome of negotiations on the draft EC directive on data protection, which appeared almost coincidentally with the group's report. However, the report has been a valuable aid in the first round of negotiations. A second draft of the directive is expected to be published in July.

Generating Plants

Mr. Evennett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to amend the generating plant licensing provisions of the Electricity Act 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Government have no such plans.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to issue a statement on his licensing policy on gas-fired generating stations.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 5 June 1992]:* The Government have made it clear that, in considering an application to construct and operate a generating station, as a general rule, matters such as the need for a generating station, its capacity, choice of fuel to be used and type of plant should be treated as commercial matters for the applicant concerned.

In a news release of 9 March 1992, the Government announced that they may also need to consider whether they should review the use of their powers under the Electricity Act to issue consent to power stations.

That remains the position.

A copy of the news release of 9 March 1992 has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his Department's policy concerning the approval of new non-fossil fuel generating plants.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave today to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan).

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations he has had with the Director General of Electricity Supply concerning the maximum number, location and total generating capacity from combined cycle gas-fired power stations capable of connection to the national grid without any adverse effect on the stability of the electricity supply system.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 5 June 1992]:* I meet the Director General of Electricity Supply from time to time and discuss issues of mutual interest.

Questions relating to grid code obligations are matters for the National Grid Company and the director general.

Dr. Twinn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those applications lodged with his Department for combined cycle gas turbine power station consents, the date of lodgement and the timetable for processing these applications; and if he will make a statement on the Government's policy on the role of gas in the United Kingdom energy market.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 5 June 1992]:* The applications made under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 are as follows:

Site	*Applicant*	*Application made*
Plymouth	PowerGen plc	5 October 1990
Staythorpe "C"	National Power plc	16 October 1990
Didcot "B"	National Power plc	14 November 1990
Ardleigh	Eastern Generation Ltd.	17 May 1991
Connah's Quay	PowerGen plc	1 July 1991
Stallingborough	Humber Power Ltd.	18 July 1991
Shoreham	South Coast Power Ltd.	27 September 1991
Seabank	Seabank Power Ltd.	18 October 1991
Greenwich	MetroPower Ltd.	31 October 1991
Trafford	Electricity System Industry Ltd.	31 December 1991
King's Lynn	Eastern Generation Ltd.	15 January 1992
Deeside	Deeside Power Development Co. Ltd.	17 January 1992
Kingsnorth	Kingsnorth Developments	13 March 1992

On timing, each application has to be dealt with on its merits. With respect to the role of gas, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave today to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan).

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what permission has been sought recently by the Atomic Energy Authority research establishment at Harwell to import plutonium 237 from Russia.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 5 June 1992]:* Imports of plutonium by the AEA are covered by an existing import licence.

Electricity Companies

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what discussions he has had with the privatised electricity companies and OFFER about the form and presentation of the companies' accounts;

(2) what advice has been given to the privatised electricity companies by him or OFFER about the valuation of assets for presentation in their accounts.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 5 June 1992]:* The successor companies' reports and accounts will have to be prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985 and any additional requirements imposed by the stock exchange.

The enforcement of licence conditions relating to the successor companies' regulatory accounts is a matter for the Director General of Electricity Supply.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Church Land

32. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what is his most recent estimate of the total of land in the possession of the Church Commissioners.

Mr. Michael Alison: At 31 December 1991 the commissioners' agricultural portfolio consisted of about 154,000 acres of mostly let farmland.

Church Maintenance

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what is their policy towards the maintenance of redundant and historic churches.

Mr. Michael Alison: Responsibility for the maintenance of Church of England churches in use for worship rests with individual parochial church councils.

The commissioners' policy on redundant churches is governed by legislation, in this case the Pastoral Measure 1983. This provides for the future of the building to be settled by a suitable alternative use; or by preservation by the redundant churches fund; or by care and maintenance by the diocesan board of finance; or, failing these, by demolition.

The Measure lays emphasis on finding a suitable alternative use for the church, if at all possible, and that is what is most commonly achieved. The new owner or lessee will normally be responsible for maintenance and this will be a consideration in determining the future of a redundant church.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Magistrates Courts, Chelmsford

38. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on the provision of magistrates courts in Chelmsford.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is for Essex magistrates courts committee, in consultation with Essex county council, to

decide what courthouse accommodation should be provided, and for the council to provide it. I understand that no formal decisions have yet been made about the future of the Chelmsford courthouse.

Law of Property Act 1925

40. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what changes he plans in the Law of Property Act 1925.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is actively considering the report by the Law Commission on continuing obligations under leases and hopes to be able to make an announcement about it in the near future.

Legal Aid

41. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will investigate the cost of the law to individuals who are not eligible for legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In a case which is not covered by legal aid a solicitor's charge is a matter to be agreed with his client. In non-contentious cases a client who feels a solicitor's bill is unreasonable may use the Law Society's free remuneration certification scheme. In addition, in both contentious and non-contentious cases costs can be taxed by the court.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what steps his Department has taken in response to the report of the Committee of Public Accounts on the working of the criminal legal aid system.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Government's response to the report, which was published on 13 May 1992, will be published in the usual manner by way of a Treasury minute. The hon. Member will, however, be aware of the circular on criminal legal aid issued to magistrates courts clerks on 1 April 1992 following the inquiry of the National Audit Office in October of last year and the appearance of the relevant accounting officers before the Public Accounts Committee in January of this year.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what were the percentage of refusals of initial applications for criminal legal aid in magistrates' courts for *(a)* the four weeks preceding the coming into force of the Lord Chancellor's recent circular on criminal legal aid and *(b)* the four weeks following that date.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make it his policy to ensure that legal aid is made available to women seeking claims through industrial tribunals.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Advice and assistance, but not representation, is already available under the legal aid "green form" scheme to men and women.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proposals he has to reduce the length of time taken by the investigations branch of the Legal Aid Board to process cases of suspected fraud by solicitors in relation to legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The investigation of fraudulent claims made by solicitors is a matter for the Legal Aid Board. Those which are subject to police investigation are given priority and close liaison is maintained with the investigating officers.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what information he has on the number of fraud cases pending against solicitors in relation to claims for legal aid under the green form scheme; and what representations he has had from chief constables or their fraud squad chiefs and others in respect of unreasonable delays in computer processing of the information on claims required for such police investigations.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I understand from the Legal Aid Board that there are currently 27 cases under investigation by its fraud investigation branch which relate to alleged offences of fraud under the green form scheme; and that no representations have been received concerning information required for police investigations.

Commonhold

Mr. Gale: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to introduce commonhold law reform in this Session of Parliament.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Queen's Speech confirmed the Government's intention to bring forward legislation in this session to enable leaseholders of flats to acquire the freehold or to extend their leases. A commonhold scheme for the freehold ownership and communal management of flats will follow as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Lockerbie Bombing

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what response he has made to the covering letter from Mr. David Leppard of this May enclosing his book "On the Trail of Terror", referring to the Lockerbie bombing.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have not received the book "On the Trail of Terror", or any letter, from its author.

EMPLOYMENT

Employee Financial Participation

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the progress which has been made by the social questions working group which is examining the draft EC recommendation on the promotion of employee participation in profits and enterprise results; and whether the European Commission has set up a working party to examine the possibilities for the creation at European level of formulae for employee financial participation schemes.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The social questions working group has completed discussion on the draft recommendation. The recommendation is due to be considered at the Labour and Social Affairs Council on 24 June.

As far as the working party is concerned, while this is no longer mentioned in the draft recommendation, we understand that it is still the Commission's intention to establish such a body, although at this stage there is no indication of when this might be, nor of its precise terms of reference.

Enterprise Allowance

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average weekly rate of enterprise allowance paid by each training and enterprise council in the United Kingdom in each 12-month period since the administration of the enterprise allowance was taken over by the TECs.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is not possible to provide the information in the form required, except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of those individuals who have started up businesses through the enterprise allowance in each of the years since its introduction, were still trading *(a)* after 12 months, *(b)* after 24 months and *(c)* after 36 months.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been awarded moneys through the enterprise allowance scheme in each year from the introduction of the scheme to the current year; and in each of those years, how many people *(a)* attended enterprise allowance awareness days, *(b)* applied for enterprise allowance assistance but were refused, *(c)* were awarded enterprise allowance assistance but had the assistance terminated within the first 12 months and *(d)* continued to receive enterprise allowance assistance for a full 12-month period.

Mr. McLoughlin: The numbers of enterprise allowance awards in each year since the scheme was introduced are set out in the following table. The information required to answer points (a), (b), (c) and (d) is not available.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme
Yearly entrants

	Number
February 1982—July 1983[1]	3,331
August 1983—March 1984	27,629
April 1984—March 1985	46,037
April 1985—March 1986	60,037
April 1986—March 1987	86,751
April 1987—March 1988	106,305
April 1988—March 1989	98,522
April 1989—March 1990	77,886
April 1990—March 1991	60,307
April 1991—March 1992	49,602

[1] (pilot).

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total sum budgeted by her Department for enterprise allowance in the current financial year; what has been the total cost of the enterprise allowance programme in each year since its introduction; and in each instance, what proportion of the total cost has been accounted for by administrative expenses.

Mr. McLoughlin: The total sum budgeted for enterprise allowance in the current financial year is £107·6 million. The information on the total cost of the enterprise allowance in each year since its introduction is set out in the table. Information on the total cost accounted for by administrative expenses is not available.

Enterprise allowance expenditure by financial year

	Great Britain £ million
1982-83	2·4
1983-84	23·2
1984-85	76·7
1985-86	103·9
1986-87	143·4
1987-88	195·9
1988-89	196·7
1989-90	170·9
1990-91	132·9
1991-92	[1]95·1

[1] This is a provisional figure which applies to expenditure for England and Wales only. Information for Scotland is not available.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretry of State for Employment how many registered disabled people have been working; and what proportion they are of the total work force in *(a)* the public sector and *(b)* the private sector for each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not available in the form requested.

However, tables showing the number and percentage of registered disabled people employed by a wide range of individual public sector employers are published in the *Employment Gazette*. The most recent complete set of figures is in the 1991 gazette and relates to June 1990. A partial set of figures, relating to June 1991 is in the February 1992 gazette.

The percentage of registered disabled people employed, on average, by employers whose figures are in the gazette, together with estimated comparisons for the private sector, for the years 1986 to 1990, are set out in the table. The data relate to employers who have 20 or more employees. Later comparable information is not yet available.

Percentage of registered disabled people employed

Sector	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Private (approximate figures)	1·0	1·0	1·0	0·9	0·9
Public (based on Gazette figures)	0·8	0·8	0·8	0·8	0·8

EDUCATION

Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the status of the adult literacy and basic skills unit; whether it has charitable status; how it is funded; and whether it publishes accounts.

Mr. Forman: The adult literacy and basic skills unit is a registered company limited by guarantee with charitable status. It is largely funded by grant from the Department for Education and the Welsh Office. The unit's accounts are published in its annual report.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when the adult literacy and basic skills unit was formed and by whom; and how many people work within the organisation *(a)* full or *(b)* part time.

Mr. Forman: The adult literacy and basic skills unit —ALBSU—was formed in 1980 by the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Secretary of State for Wales as an agency of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education—NIACE. In 1991 ALBSU became independent of NIACE and is now a limited company and a registered charity. ALBSU currently employs 21 full-time and no part-time staff.

Environmental Education

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to include environmental education as a part of teacher training courses.

Mr. Forth: All courses of initial teacher training are required to ensure that prospective teachers are able to incorporate in their teaching cross-circular dimensions and themes, including environmental education.

Local Management of Schools

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a table showing, for each local education authority with an approved LMS scheme *(a)* the percentage of the aggregated schools budget that is distributed by the age-weighted pupil numbers and *(b)* the ratio of the relevant age-weightings expressed in six bands of pupil ages—for pupils aged under five years, pupils in each of the four key stages and sixth-form pupils—with pupils in key stage 2 representing 1 in each ratio.

Mr. Forth: Figures on pupil-led funding for 1991-92 are contained in the table. Figures for 1992-93 are not yet available, but I will write to the hon. Member when our analysis of the data received from local education authorities is complete. The information on each authority's age-weightings could be collated only at disproportionate cost.

Percentage of aggrevated schools budget (ASB) based on pupil numbers and ages (1991-92)

(1) Local Education Authority	*(2) Pupil-LED funding as a percentage of ASB 1991-92*	*(1990-91)*
1. Isles of Scilly	93·21	(—)
2. Dudley	90·00	(85·72)
3. Lincolnshire	88·51	(87·25)
4. Barking	88·36	(86·73)
5. South Tyneside	88·33	(86·93)
6. Gateshead	87·04	(84·36)
7. Wigan	86·40	(84·35)
8. Bolton	86·16	(85·73)
9. Northumberland	86·07	(85·49)
10. Brent	86·00	(77·81)
11. Bexley	85·39	(84·40)
12. Tameside	85·33	(85·57)
13. Kent	84·93	(83·72)
14. Oldham	84·69	(84·77)
15. Bromley	84·43	(84·99)
16. Trafford	84·40	(83·28)
17. Redbridge	84·00	(89·30)
18. Sefton	83·79	(83·33)
19. Cornwall	83·75	(80·93)
20. Coventry	83·57	(83·52)
21. Knowsley	83·50	(75·00)
22. Harrow	83·49	(83·83)
23. Westminster	83·32	(84·20)
24. Leicestershire	83·19	(—)
25. Calderdale	83·19	(82·17)
26. Avon	82·91	(82·30)
27. Devon	82·78	(82·64)
28. Northamptonshire	82·62	(82·19)
29. Rotherham	82·57	(81·79)
30. Suffolk	82·29	(82·57)
31. West Sussex	82·29	(82·13)
32. Sunderland	82·25	(80·69)
33. Manchester	82·14	(—)
34. Salford	82·02	(81·69)
35. North Yorkshire	82·02	(85·51)
36. Barnsley	81·98	(82·80)
37. Hereford/Worcester	81·95	(—)
38. Isle of Wight	81·85	(81·62)
39. Solihull	81·70	(82·29)
40. Newcastle	81·66	(80·66)
41. Waltham Forest	81·66	(81·99)
42. Wiltshire	81·56	(81·00)
43. Bury	81·42	(81·45)
44. Cambridgeshire	81·00	(82·34)
45. Gloucestershire	80·64	(83·22)
46. Sutton	80·53	(80·29)
47. Ealing	80·53	(80·62)
48. Humberside	80·42	(81·97)
49. Enfield	80·40	(79·21)
50. Cleveland	80·33	(81·43)
51. Stockport	80·31	(—)
52. Leeds	80·26	(78·90)
53. Croydon	80·22	(—)
54. Durham	80·20	(80·40)
55. Cheshire	80·16	(77·78)
56. Liverpool	80·00	(75·00)
57. Rochdale	80·00	(75·00)
see Footnote 2		
58. Dorset	79·94	(79·03)
59. Newham	79·85	(—)
60. Richmond	79·79	(77·26)
61. Lancashire	79·60	(—)
62. Wirral	79·55	(—)
63. Staffordshire	79·34	(84·00)
64. Berkshire	79·31	(79·68)
65. Somerset	79·09	(79·99)
66. Buckinghamshire	79·06	(79·73)
67. Sandwell	79·03	(74·94)
68. Warwickshire	79·02	(79·89)
69. Cumbria	78·83	(75·62)
70. Birmingham	78·69	(78·63)
71. Bedfordshire	78·50	(77·00)
72. North Tyneside	78·00	(78·00)
73. Merton	77·99	(78·36)
74. Hillingdon	77·93	(—)
75. Walsall	77·87	(78·19)
76. Shropshire	77·86	(77·91)
77. Hounslow	77·82	(81·42)
78. Bradford	77·66	(78·51)
79. Oxfordshire	77·60	(75·61)
80. Haringey	77·37	(78·25)
81. Sheffield	77·30	(77·19)
82. Kirklees	77·27	(78·17)
83. Barnet	76·86	(75·19)
84. Kingston	76·67	(76·84)
85. Doncaster	76·66	(75·38)
86. Surrey	76·58	(74·91)
87. Essex	76·56	(77·05)
88. St. Helens	76·50	(75·00)
89. Hampshire	76·35	(76·63)
90. Nottinghamshire	76·34	(—)
91. East Sussex	76·29	(77·41)
92. Wakefield	75·76	(75·29)
93. Hertfordshire	75·33	(—)
94. Derbyshire	75·32	(76·04)
95. Norfolk	75·31	(75·99)

(1) Local Education Authority	(2) Pupil-LED funding as a percentage of ASB 1991-92	(1990-91)
96. Havering	75·09	(75·36)
97. Wolverhampton	774·88	(75·00)
National averages	80·17	

Footnotes to table showing the extent of pupil-led funding.

[1] The LEAs are ranked according to how much the funds delegated to schools have been allocated on the basis of pupil numbers and ages, with those allocating a greater percentage of pupil-led funding at the top of the ranking order.

2. The aggregated schools budget (ASB) is that part of the potential schools budget which is delegated to the school level. The current requirement is that at least 75 per cent. of an LEA's ASB is based on pupil numbers and ages. From 1993 (1995 for inner London authorities) the minimum percentage will be raised to 80 per cent. The percentage of pupil-led funding in 1990-91 is given in brackets. Where a figure is not given in brackets, either the LMS scheme was not in operation last year or the relevant information was not contained in the LEA's budget statement.

NB The percentages stated may differ from the percentages calculated by the individual LEAs because of the effects of rounding.

Schools Admissions Register

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what restrictions are placed upon the commercial or other uses that can be made of the names and addresses on the schools admissions register when a parent has obtained such information by legitimate means in connection with a petition or a ballot being organised for a school to seek grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: None.

Illiteracy

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether the numbers of functionally illiterate people in England and Wales are increasing or declining; and when such records started to be kept.

Mr. Forman: The Department's current estimate of the number of people in England and Wales who are functionally illiterate is based on a survey carried out some years ago by the adult literacy and basic skills unit. There is no evidence as to whether numbers are growing or declining. ALBSU is however currently undertaking a similar survey, the results of which are likely to be known within the next 12 months.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 20 May 1992, *Official Report*, columns *158-59*, if he will publish a breakdown of the 5·5 million people who are functionally illiterate in England and Wales into groups according to age, area and ethnic origin.

Mr. Forman: The figure of 5·5 million functionally illiterate people in England and Wales is an estimate based on a survey carried out by the adult literacy and basic skills unit. The survey did not distinguish according to age, area and ethnic origin.

Environmental Studies

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will make it his policy to review the current position of environmental education and promote the teaching of environmental studies in association with social education as a compulsory subject at both primary and secondary levels;

(2) what efforts are being made by his Department to promote the teaching of the concept of sustainable development as part of the core curriculum.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend sees no reason to change the present arrangements for the teaching of environmental education and personal and social education as cross-curricular themes to all pupils through the compulsory core and foundation subjects and, where appropriate, additionally.

Provisions for the study of environmental geography and sustainable development are set out in the geography order and its associated documents which are issued to all schools.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the documents or projects produced by his Department to be used in schools to raise the awareness of pupils on environmental issues; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Environmental education is a cross-curricular theme taught to all pupils through the core and foundation subjects, the terms of which are set out in the statutory orders and associated documents issued by my Department. Additional guidance has been provided by the National Curriculum Council.

Toxic Shock Syndrome

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information is available on the tampon industry's schools education programme; and if information on toxic shock syndrome is incorporated into schools curricula.

Mr. Forth: Teaching about the use of sanitary protection would normally be covered within a school's programme of sex education. Under section 18(2) of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, responsibility for determining an individual school's policy on the content and organisation of sex education rests with the school governing body.

Free School Meals

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the number of pupils receiving free school meals at *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools for each year since 1981.

Mr. Forth: The readily available information for pupils in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England is as follows. Information for 1981 was not published, and no survey was undertaken in 1985. The discontinuity in the figures in 1988 reflects the introduction of a new provision in the Social Security Act 1986 which came into force in 1988. Before then, LEAs had discretionary powers to provide free school meals to whomsoever they wished. From 1988, LEAs must charge for meals provided to all pupils other than those in receipt of income support.

Year	Nursery' and Primary' Pupils	Secondary Pupils
1982	533,140	398,190
1983	597,545	442,874
1984	651,647	461,954
1986	685,018	425,634
1987	682,804	386,383
1988	491,000	249,000
1989	515,395	235,270
1990	519,228	222,929
1991	562,993	235,107

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what extra grant is made available for small schools under grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: All grant-maintained schools, irrespective of size, are eligible for transitional grants, special purpose grants and capital grants over and above their annual maintenance grant. The special purpose grant for staff and curriculum development and the capital formula grant each includes a minimum allocation, which is to the benefit of small schools. In addition, the annual maintenance grant will include a small school allowance to the extent that this is the case under the local management of schools scheme of the grant-maintained school's former local education authority.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what inspections are being made into the operations of grant-maintained schools; and whether his Department will be publishing a report on the findings.

Mr. Forth: The arrangements for inspection under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 will ensure that we have detailed inspection reports on a quarter of all schools, including GM schools, each year. In the meantime, Her Majesty's inspectorate has included GM schools, along with other maintained schools, in its regular programme of visits. To date, these visits do not yet provide the sort of evidence base that would be expected for a report aimed at fulfilling that part of HMI's remit which is to make known more widely good practice and promising developments, and draw attention to weaknesses requiring attention.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what geographical and age range criteria he employs to determine which combinations of schools will be entitled to consideration when considering applications from clusters of schools for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: At present, schools must apply individually to my right hon. Friend for grant-maintained status following a successful parental ballot. Each application is treated strictly on its merits. My right hon. Friend is considering arrangements to permit schools to apply for grant-maintained status in groups.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if it is his intention to introduce legislation to turn all local education authority schools, other than nursery and special schools, into grant-maintained schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: It is already possible for any local education authority county or voluntary school to apply to my right hon. Friend for grant-maintained status after a successful parental ballot. This arrangement is working well and there are no plans to change it.

As at 4 June, 260 schools have already been approved for grant-maintained status. In time I expect grant-maintained status to become the natural organisational model, particularly for secondary schools.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidelines are issued by his Department for the operation of petitions and ballots which seek to determine whether a school should apply for grant-maintained status; what are the criteria for determining who is eligible to petition and to vote; and what arrangements are made to cross-check a person's entitlement to petition or vote with entries in local government and parliamentary electoral registers.

Mr. Forth: The Department produces a booklet entitled "How to Become a Grant-Maintained School" which gives guidance for the operation of petitions and ballots in connection with seeking to achieve grant-maintained status. It is the duty of the governing body to take reasonable steps to determine who is eligible to vote by virtue of their being a parent of a registered pupil at the school.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has for the long-term funding of grant-maintained schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: We are keeping the matter under review as the number of grant-maintained schools increases.

Student Finance

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what action the Government have taken to measure the effects of the student loans scheme on participation by social class or gender;

(2) when he will undertake a survey of students' income and expenditure.

Mr. Forman: The Government and the Student Loans Company are committed to monitoring student loans. We have just issued a statistical bulletin which analyses take-up during academic year 1990-91 by gender, age and region. The Student Loans Company's first annual report was published on 21 October last year and placed in the Library. A second will be published this autumn. We shall commission further surveys of students' income and expenditure as and when appropriate.

Asthma

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his Department's estimate of the number of days lost from school due to asthma amongst the under-10 age group; and what were the comparable figures for five and 10 years ago.

Mr. Forth: The information is not collected centrally.

School Bussing

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals he has to revise the legislation relating to school bussing in the Education Act 1944 to take account of the changes in the law concerning parental choice of schools.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has no current plans to change the law on home to school transport, which gives local education authorities the duty to arrange necessary transport and an unrestricted power to offer further help in the light of local circumstances.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he has any changes to announce to cash limits on votes within his responsibility for 1992-93.

Mr. Patten *[pursuant to his reply, 4 June, 1992, c. 618-19]:* Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the running cost limit of class XI vote 4 will be reduced by £1,530,000 from £105,060,000 to £103,530,000.

This reduction results from the decision to transfer responsibility for sport to the Department of National Heritage, and responsibility for science to the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service.

SCOTLAND

Argyll and Clyde Health Board

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what annual salaries, allowances or honoraria are paid to the chairman and each member of Argyll and Clyde health board; if any increases or decreases in these are planned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The chairman of Argyll and Clyde health board currently receives remuneration of £17,700 per annum and non-executive members receive £5,000. In addition, the chairman and members are entitled to claim travelling and subsistence allowances at rates set for members of public bodies. No immediate changes in remuneration and allowances are currently planned, but the position is being kept under review.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what undertakings firms have to give about their continued presence in an enterprise zone before receiving assistance from Scottish Enterprise or local enterprise companies.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Such matters are dealt with on a case-by-case basis, but as a general rule, before any company is considered for an enterprise zone site owned by Scottish Enterprise or a local enterprise company it would have to demonstrate genuine medium-term business prospects. If an EZ site is sold to a company, the conditions of sale would probably include a first option buy-back clause operative for the lifetime of the zone. Any assistance granted to the company would relate to employment levels and any serious reduction in employment would trigger a clawback arrangement.

Renfrewshire Enterprise

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of Renfrewshire Enterprise; and what matters he hopes to discuss.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Communications between my right hon. Friend and me and the local enterprise companies take place chiefly through Scottish Enterprise; and we have frequent discussions with the chairman and board members of Scottish Enterprise.

I myself had a very useful and constructive meeting with the chairman of Renfrewshire Enterprise and his colleagues on 14 October last year at which a wide range of topics relating to training and industrial development were discussed; and I hope to meet representatives of Renfrewshire Enterprise again in the near future.

Tattoos

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each health authority in Scotland the number of patients waiting for operations; and of those how many are waiting for the removal of tattoos.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The total number of patients waiting for hospital treatment at 30 September 1991 is shown in the table:

Health board	*In-patient treatment*	*Day case treatment*
Argyll and Clyde	3,715	1,377
Ayrshire and Arran	4,686	819
Borders	571	182
Dumfries and Galloway	2,023	229
Fife	2,681	1,487
Forth Valley	2,190	723
Grampian	4,046	1,609
Greater Glasgow	16,777	4,835
Highland	2,223	693
Lanarkshire	4,199	1,357
Lothian	12,222	3,830
Orkney	14	9
Shetland	45	71
Tayside	6,020	2,470
Western Isles	138	52
Scotland	61,550	19,743

Information about the number of patients waiting for the removal of tattoos is not centrally available.

Funerals

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of the Institute of Burial and Cremation Administration to discuss the operation of cemeteries, crematoria and funeral undertakings in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present for such a meeting.

Health Service

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the average number of national health service beds available in the Argyll and Clyde health board area in each year since 1982 and the average number of those described as acute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is shown in the table.

National Health Service hospitals in Argyll and Clyde Health Board —average available staffed beds

Year ending 31 March	*All specialties*	*Acute specialties*
1982	4,484	1,259
1983	4,455	1,258
1984	4,433	1,255
1985	4,437	1,248
1986	4,386	1,245
1987	4,312	1,236
1988	4,307	1,233
1989	4,130	1,276
1990	4,103	1,275
1991	3,976	1,257

Forests (Equestrian Access)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will require the Forestry Commission to guarantee equestrian access as of right in the titles of any forests disposed of by the commission; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: No. The sale of Forestry Commission woodlands does not affect horse riding on public rights of way which are bridleways. Other equestrian access to Forestry Commission woodlands is only allowed by express permission of the commission. In such cases, permission to ride in Forestry Commission woodlands after sale will be a matter for agreement with the new owners.

Local Development Companies

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give details of the number and cost of the external consultancy studies on local development companies under Scottish Enterprise;

(2) if he intends to publish the findings of the external consultancy studies on local development companies under Scottish Enterprise.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Decisions on whether to commission external consultancy studies and whether to publish the findings of any such studies are matters for Scottish Enterprise. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Child Care, Fife

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the report on the inquiry into child care in Fife was completed; if he will publish the report; what were the total costs of the inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I understand that the report of the inquiry into the child care policies in Fife region is likely to be completed within the next few days. So far as publication of the report and the costs of the inquiry are concerned I refer the hon. Member to my replies of 19 May, at columns *123-24*.

HIV

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many payments have been made to non-haemophiliacs infected with HIV as a result of NHS blood/tissue transfers, or to families of the deceased, following the announcement by his Department on 17 February that special provisions would be made.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* Payment of five claims received under the scheme has been made. A further three claims are in the process of being validated and payment will be made as soon as possible.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent on advertising electoral registration in Scotland in 1989, 1990 and 1991; how much will be spent in the current year; and of this sum how much is spent on *(a)* television, *(b)* newspaper, *(c)* billboard and *(d)* other advertising.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 3 June 1992]:* Annual publicity expenditure on electoral registration in Scotland in recent years is as follows:

	£
1989-90	30,648·48
1990-91	39,192·05
1991-92	41,640·50
1992-93	[1]48,000·00

[1] Estimate.

The expenditure for 1992-93 will cover newspaper advertisements along with an associated poster display in council and other public offices, libraries etcetera.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the population in each parliamentary constituency; and what is the number of *(a)* electors on each constituency register and *(b)* those registered on the community charge register within the area of each constituency.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 3 June 1992]:* The information requested by the hon. Member is set out in the table for the latest available population estimates and electoral registrations by parliamentary constituency. No information is available centrally about the number of persons within parliamentary constituency areas who are on the community charge register.

Parliamentary constituency	[1] *Population estimate at 1990*	*Total electors on 1992 register*
Aberdeen North	75,500	60,623
Aberdeen South	73,800	59,230
Angus, East	82,400	63,637
Argyll and Bute	66,200	48,436
Ayr	84,700	66,284
Banff and Buchan	85,000	65,631
Caithness and Sutherland	39,800	31,173
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	72,100	56,024
Central Fife	72,400	56,543
Clackmannan	63,600	49,441
Clydebank and Milngavie	63,200	47,773
Clydesdale	82,600	62,684
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	63,100	47,155
Cunninghame North	72,500	55,490
Cunninghame South	65,100	49,745
Dumbarton	79,800	57,894
Dumfries	78,400	61,773
Dundee East	76,000	59,328
Dundee West	77,700	60,386
Dunfermline East	67,800	50,452
Dunfermline West	69,300	51,310

Parliamentary constituency	[1] Population estimate at 1990	Total electors on 1992 register
East Kilbride	83,100	64,824
East Lothian	85,500	67,588
Eastwood	84,100	64,560
Edinburgh Central	69,100	56,839
Edinburgh East	57,700	46,157
Edinburgh Leith	70,800	57,073
Edinburgh Pentlands	69,600	56,433
Edinburgh South	76,100	61,999
Edinburgh West	74,700	59,702
Falkirk East	68,000	52,387
Falkirk West	65,600	50,631
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	70,000	54,977
Glasgow Cathcart	60,200	45,149
Glasgow Central	64,200	48,383
Glasgow Garscadden	55,400	41,675
Glasgow Govan	61,400	46,199
Glasgow Hillhead	73,600	57,586
Glasgow Maryhill	63,600	48,791
Glasgow Pollok	62,000	46,655
Glasgow Provan	49,700	36,986
Glasgow Rutherglen	70,600	53,325
Glasgow Shettleston	68,500	52,381
Glasgow Springburn	60,100	46,216
Gordon	102,500	81,097
Greenock and Port Glasgow	70,000	52,661
Hamilton	82,500	62,347
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	90,400	70,164
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	81,100	62,777
Kincardine and Deeside	84,900	67,216
Kirkcaldy	67,400	52,191
Linlithgow	82,000	61,979
Livingston	82,700	62,122
Midlothian	81,300	61,178
Monklands East	65,800	49,059
Monklands West	68,300	49,935
Moray	84,500	63,944
Motherwell North	78,000	58,106
Motherwell South	68,800	50,674
North East Fife	68,900	54,196
North Tayside	72,600	56,353
Orkney and Shetland	41,800	31,837
Paisley North	61,800	46,867
Paisley South	63,600	48,385
Perth and Kinross	85,300	65,826
Renfrew West and Inverclyde	76,000	58,897
Ross, Cromarty and Skye	74,100	56,112
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	54,100	44,001
Stirling	74,900	58,814
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	84,600	61,924
Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale	49,400	39,907
Western Isles	30,700	23,015
Total	5,102,600	3,929,112

[1] The derivation of these population figures involved a number of approximations.

Plantable Land

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each financial year since April 1980 *(a)* the amount of plantations and plantable land in hectares that has been sold by the Forestry Commission, *(b)* the proceeds from the sale and *(c)* the book value of the sale; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 3 June 1992]:* The information is available in the form requested only from 1986, as follows:

Year ended 31 March	Areas (hectares)	Receipts (£000)	Book value (£000)
1986	8,314	9,592	7,845
1987	6,186	8,308	6,120
1988	6,387	6,839	6,406
1989	4,328	4,993	6,967
1990	5,559	6,972	7,992
1991	4,770	7,073	11,509

The receipts are the actual prices received from the sale of plantations and plantable land, and reflect the state of the market at the time of sale. The book value is calculated from the expected future value of the wood production at the time of felling, discounted at the commission's target rate of return of 3 per cent.

Postgraduate Grants

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to review the Scottish Education Department grants regime with regard to students wishing to pursue postgraduate qualifications.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 June 1992]:* The operation of the postgraduate students' allowance scheme, which provides assistance to students undertaking vocational postgraduate courses, is reviewed at regular intervals in common with other schemes of student support.

Fisheries Decommissioning

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment has been made of the employment consequences of the introduction of the proposed decommissioning package.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 4 June 1992]:* The detailed arrangements for the proposed decommissioning scheme are currently the subject of consultation with the industry. The impact of the scheme will also depend on the circumstances of the particular vessels which take up the scheme, but in the long term employment in fishing and related industries will best be protected by our proposals to reduce fishing pressure and hence conserve fish stocks.

Fishermen (Retraining)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he proposes any measures to ensure proper access to training and retraining facilities for those choosing to leave the fishing industry; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 4 June 1992]:* At present Scottish Enterprise and several of its enterprise companies are actively engaged with representatives of the

fishing industry, its companies and local authorities to plan for the future needs of fishermen. The implications of reduced fishing activities in fisheries dependent areas are currently being addressed within the European Community, both as part of the common fisheries policy mid-term review and as part of the reform structural funds. Work is currently being undertaken by the European Commmission to identify dependent areas and possible measures to retrain and reorientate fishermen leaving the industry into other economic activities. The Government will give careful consideration to the results which emerge from these studies.

EC Cohesion Fund

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment his Department has made of the possible advantages to Scotland of the EC cohesion fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 4 June 1992]:* No such assessment has been made because no assistance will be available to Scotland through the cohesion fund. It will assist only member states whose per capita GNP is less than 90 per cent. of the Community average—Portugal, Spain, Greece and the Republic of Ireland—provided they meet certain macro-economic policy conditions.

Creel Fisheries

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department has considered the report jointly commissioned by Highland regional council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise into the prospect for creel fisheries in north of Scotland waters; and if he will make a statement on the implications of the reports recommendations for his Department.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 4 June 1992]:* The report was prepared to assist Highland regional council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise in developing their own strategies relating to the industry in their region.

Community Charge

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the amount of community charge in each district and islands area in *(a)* 1991-92 and *(b)* 1992-93 which is attributable to the costs of covering non-payment in previous years.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 4 June 1992]:* This information is not collected centrally.

Forestry

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to prevent the straight-up ploughing for forestry at Forest farm, Glen Croick, Sutherland.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 5 June 1992.]*: The Forestry Commission has approved an application for grant aid to plant about 2,000 hectares of native pinewood at Croick. It is a condition of this approval that any poughing is carried out in accordance with the commission's forests and water guidelines. Straight-up ploughing is generally acceptable under these guidelines. However, a small, steeply sloping area at Croick has been ploughed contrary to the approved plan, and the owners have agreed to carry out remedial action.

Education

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in the current revenue support grant provision for Strathclyde regional council, what proportion is intended for the purpose of education; and what proportion of that sum is considered necessary to meet nursery education requirements.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 5 June 1992]:* Local authority current expenditure is supported by aggregate external finance—AEF—which consists of non-domestic rate income—NDRI—revenue support grant—RSG—and specific grants. The NDRI and RSG components are not hypothecated to particular services.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Comber Bypass

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the land has been acquired for phases 2 and 3 of the Comber bypass; and if he will make a statement about progress with the design work for this bypass.

Mr. Atkins: Land acquisition and design work for phase 2 is well advanced. No work has commenced on phase 3 which currently falls outside the five-year major works programme.

Tattoos

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for each health authority in Northern Ireland the number of patients waiting for operations; and of those how many are waiting for the removal of tattoos.

Mr. Hanley: Information is not collected centrally on the numbers waiting for operations. The numbers of patients waiting for in-patient admission to the relevant surgical specialties in hospitals managed by each of the health and social service boards as at 31 March 1992 are as follows:

Board	*All surgical specialties*	*Plastic surgery*
Eastern	16,542	1,695
Northern	1,664	—
Southern	1,298	—
Western	3,489	—
Northern Ireland	22,993	1,695

The removal of tattoos is only one of the procedures carried out within the specialty of plastic surgery and the number waiting for treatment is not available centrally.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to ensure that all lists of candidates for public appointments in Northern Ireland contain equal numbers of men and women.

Mr. Mates: All appointments to public bodies are made on merit and the particular expertise which each individual

brings to the post. I will continue to ensure that sufficient numbers of women's names appear on the list of candidates submitted for consideration to increase substantially the representation of women on all public bodies in Northern Ireland.

New Zealand Flatworm

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland at how many places in Northern Ireland the New Zealand flatworm has been identified; what effect its presence has had on native earthworm populations; what research he has undertaken as to the consequences for soil fertility as a result of infestation by the flatworm; whether any control measures have been implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The New Zealand flatworm has now been identified at just over 300 sites, the majority of which are domestic gardens. It has occasionally been associated with reductions in earthworm numbers. The diversity of earthworm species may also be reduced by this flatworm.

The importance of earthworms to soil fertility is well established and the impact of the flatworm on earthworm populations in Northern Ireland is being studied by scientists from the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland.

There are no control measures currently available.

Tobacco

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he intends to extend the provisions of the Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Act 1991 to Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 will come into operation on 1 July 1992.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Household Incomes

12. **Mr. Michael Alison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the results of the households below average income analysis for 1989 is likely to be available and published.

Mr. Burt: As we announced on 12 December 1991, we expect the next edition of "Households Below Average Income" to be ready for publication in July. The date will be announced in due course in the Central Statistical Office monthly bulletin.

Maxwell Pensions

13. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the current position of the current pensioners, deferred pensioners and contributories of the Maxwell pension funds.

18. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the latest Government position towards pensions in the Maxwell-owned companies.

Mr. Lilley: I understand that all Maxwell pensioners received their full payments for May apart from 240 members of the Headington pension plan. I am well aware that the uncertainty facing many Maxwell pensioners must be causing them considerable anxiety and distress, and I share the deep concern of the House about this. I shall be making a statement shortly.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to guarantee payments to pensioners presently receiving payments from the Maxwell pension funds.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) on 13 May at column *140*.

Benefits (Means Testing)

14. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to carry out a review of the scope for means testing of all universal benefits.

Mr. Lilley: On a number of occasions we have made clear our commitment to child benefit and retirement pension. We shall continue to monitor the effectiveness of the social security system, as we have done since introducing the major reforms of 1988.

Disabled People (Benefits)

16. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has had on the levels of benefit payable to people with disabilities.

Mr. Scott: We receive a large volume of correspondence on disability benefits some of which touches on the rate of benefit payable. Under this Government, spending on benefits for disabled people has risen by 173 per cent. in real terms, a record of which we are rightly proud.

Occupational Pensions

17. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners currently have an occupational pension; and what was the equivalent figure in 1979.

Miss Widdecombe: I am pleased to tell my hon. Friend that 57 per cent. of all pensioners, and 69 per cent. of those who had recently retired, were receiving income from occupational pensions in 1988. The equivalent proportions in 1979 were 44 and 54 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many United Kingdom pensioners also have an occupational pension.

Miss Widdecombe: I am pleased to tell my hon. Friend that a total of 6 million people receive income from an occupational pension. Of these, 4·5 million are over state pension age.

Income Support

19. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to increase income support provision for young people.

Mr. Burt: We have no such plans, although all aspects of income support are kept under review as a matter of course.

Social Fund

20. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to modify the structure and administration of the social fund.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) earlier today.

Youth Training

21. **Ms. Coffey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will restore income support to 16 to 17-year-olds who cannot find a youth training place.

Mr. Burt: The Government's policy of providing a guarantee of a suitable youth training place to all young people who want one, instead of their depending on social security benefits, is the most effective way of encouraging young people to make the most of their opportunities. However, income support is available to those vulnerable groups of young people who are unable to participate in YT and to those seeking a YT place who would otherwise be at risk of severe hardship. We have no plans to restore general entitlement to income support, but we are monitoring closely the operation of these rules with a view to streamlining their administration where possible.

Retirement Age

22. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a further statement about the age of retirement.

Miss Widdecombe: Our discussion paper, published on 18 December 1991, has been well received and there have already been many considered responses from both individuals and organisations. The discussion period ends on 30 June and we intend to bring forward detailed proposals in the light of comments received.

Centenarians

23. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women reached their 100th birthday in the past year.

Miss Widdecombe: I am pleased to tell my hon. Friend that in the past year 263 men and 2,090 women celebrated their 100th birthdays.

Social Security Expenditure

24. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total of Government spending on social security as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Mr. Burt: For the year ending March 1992 social security spending is estimated to have been 11·73 per cent. of GDP.

Pension Fund Trustees

25. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to review the role and responsibility of pension fund trustees.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State earlier today.

Benefits System

26. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what further proposals he has for review of the benefits system.

Mr. Burt: We shall continue to build upon the reforms introduced in 1988 with the aim of further modernising and improving our social security system.

Benefit Rights

27. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what studies he has made of the impact of the withdrawal of the standard rights to benefit on the health and well-being of unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds *(a)* who leave home and *(b)* who do not leave home.

Mr. Burt: This Department has not commissioned research on this specific topic. However, I welcome and study carefully reports on young people published by voluntary organisations and other groups.

Pension Payments

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the effect on the availability of cash at post offices of the maximum limit of three months' pension which can be collected at one time; and if he will review this limit.

Mr. Burt: Arrangements for benefit payment and liaison with the Post Office Counters Ltd. are a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Deserted Wives

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he plans to introduce legislation which will require the pension and life assurance benefits of husbands to be taken into consideration when assessing the level of benefit for deserted wives; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: We have no such plans.

Pension Law

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to publish his proposed review of pension law; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State earlier today.

Family Credit

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take action to speed up the processing of family credit claims; and if sufficient resources are available to meet current levels of claims.

Mr. Burt: The administration of family credit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Departmental Press Release

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the purpose and cost to public funds of his Department's press release dated 11 May consisting of a curriculum vitae of the Minister of State for Social Secuirty and Disabled People; and how many inquiries were received in answer to it.

Mr. Burt: In common with other Government Departments' practice, the press release of updated biographical details was for information only. The cost for production and distribution was under £100. To date there have been no inquiries.

Pensioners (Income)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the change in pensioners' real income since 1979.

Miss Widdecombe: The average total net income of single pensioners and pensioner couples increased by 34 per cent. between 1979 and 1988.

Queen's Speech

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the measures announced in the Queen's Speech; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: We have received a number of representations concerning the new 1 per cent. additional rebate which we intend to introduce from April 1993 for appropriate personal pension holders age 30 and over.

We shall continue to build upon the reforms introduced in 1988 with the aim of further modernising and improving our social security system.

WALES

Fish Protection

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he plans to announce his decision on the implementation of byelaws regarding the protection of salmon and sea-trout in the estuaries of *(a)* Meirionnydd and *(b)* north Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Following receipt of these proposed byelaws in 1991, consideration by the Department and discussions with the promoters have identified the need for some modifications. The Welsh Office has yet to receive final versions from the promoters.

Enterprise Allowance

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of those individuals who have started up businesses based on the enterprise allowance in each of the years since its introduction, were still trading *(a)* after 12 months, *(b)* after 24 months and *(c)* after 36 months.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people have been awarded moneys through the enterprise allowance scheme in Wales in each year from the introduction of the scheme to the current year; and in each of those years, how many people *(a)* attended enterprise allowance awareness day seminars, *(b)* applied for enterprise allowance assistance but were refused, *(c)* were awarded enterprise allowance assistance but had the assistance terminated within the first 12 months and *(d)* continued to receive enterprise allowance assistance for a full 12-month period.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The numbers of enterprise allowance awards in Wales are readily available only since 1987-88 and are set out in the table.

The information required to answer points *(a)* to *(d)* of the question is not available.

Enterprise allowance scheme
Yearly entrants (Wales)

April to March	
1987-88	6,654
1988-89	6,942
1989-90	5,433
1990-91	4,048
1991-92	3,267

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total sum budgeted by his Department for the enterprise allowance scheme in Wales in the current financial year; what has been the total cost of the enterprise allowance scheme in Wales in each year since its introduction; and in each year, what proportion of the total cost is accounted for by administrative expenses.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The total sum budgeted for enterprise allowance in Wales in the current financial year is £5·3 million. The information on the total cost of enterprise allowance in each year since 1987-88 is set out in the table. The information is not readily available for Wales for the earlier years from the introduction of the scheme in 1982 to 1986-87.

Information on the total cost accounted for by administrative expenses is not available.

Enterprise allowance scheme
Expenditure by financial year (Wales)

	£ million
1987-88	12·0
1988-89	12·9
1989-90	12·4
1990-91	9·0
1991-92	7·1

Valleys Programme

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the urban aid allocations for each year between 1987 and 1988 and 1992-93 to each district authority in the valleys programme area.

Mr. David Hunt: Urban programme allocations between 1987-88 and 1992-93 for district authorities wholly or partly within the valleys programme area are given in the table:

Local Authority	1987-88 £	1988-89 £	1989-90 £	1990-91 £	1991-92 £	1992-93 £
Dinefwr BC	132,211	469,751	377,700	443,000	687,731	365,375
Llanelli BC	565,181	322,197	433,337	495,254	442,327	489,327
Blaenau Gwent BC	983,291	1,535,680	2,415,849	3,658,459	5,910,950	2,168,010
Islwyn BC	467,461	573,219	869,900	1,004,350	1,070,884	1,456,686
Torfaen BC	720,127	1,230,806	1,255,349	927,488	821,739	664,436
Cynon Valley BC	938,186	979,098	1,072,744	1,405,701	2,284,621	1,803,960
Merthyr Tydfil BC	1,229,332	1,112,515	1,215,003	1,207,657	1,071,184	1,084,581
Ogwr BC	1,026,757	1,212,365	1,201,414	1,195,481	1,195,108	1,229,028
Rhondda BC	1,037,248	1,943,154	2,042,747	2,033,889	1,836,311	2,221,285
Rhymney Valley DC	708,991	1,032,646	1,096,007	1,098,230	655,358	834,750
Taff Ely BC	333,113	307,380	429,045	437,561	675,850	669,782
Brecknock BC	99,732	1,600	101,600	122,000	27,000	250,000
Port Talbot BC	631,902	770,823	564,485	705,425	630,700	183,047
Lliw Valley BC	362,735	571,485	431,750	368,900	309,300	368,078
Neath BC	415,678	496,627	503,544	516,324	823,520	554,317
Swansea CC	722,858	673,528	534,879	524,943	574,727	544,277

Note: Pre-1992-93 figures include, where applicable, supplementary allocations made during the year. Allocations to Blaenau Gwent BC from 1988-89 onwards include special provision for the National Garden Festival.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the male, female and youth unemployment rates in April for the years *(a)* 1988, *(b)* 1989, *(c)* 1990, *(d)* 1991 and *(e)* 1992 for the United Kingdom, Wales and the south Wales valleys programme area.

Mr. David Hunt: The table shows the information requested, where available. Youth unemployment cannot be expressed as a rate as a breakdown of the work force by age is not available.

Unemployment rates at April[1]

	Valleys Area		Wales		United Kingdom	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1988	18·9	9·9	13·5	7·7	10·8	6·5
1989	14·9	7·0	9·8	5·2	8·3	4·4
1990	13·1	5·1	8·4	3·8	7·4	3·5
1991	17·5	5·6	11·4	4·4	10·3	4·4
1992	18·7	5·9	13·1	4·9	13·0	5·3

Source: Employment Department.
[1] Workforce based, unadjusted.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the percentage change in *(a)* total unemployment and *(b)* long-term unemployment between April 1988 and April 1992 and between April 1990 and April 1992 for the United Kingdom, Wales and the south Wales valleys.

Mr. David Hunt: The table gives the percentage changes in total unemployment and long-term unemployment as requested.

	Percentage change April 1988-1992	Percentage change April 1990-1992
Total Unemployment[1]		
South Wales Valleys area	−14·3	37·2
Wales	−10·3	48·6
United Kingdom	7·9	68·3
Long-Term Unemployment[2]		
South Wales Valleys area	−18·3	60·1
Wales	−24·2	60·3
United Kingdom	−18·3	55·8

Source: Employment Department.
[1] Unadjusted.
[2] Unemployed for more than 52 weeks.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list he number and rates of long-term unemployed more than one year in April for the years *(a)* 1988, *(b)* 1989, *(c)* 1990, *(d)* 1991 and *(e)* 1992 for the United Kingdom, Wales and south Wales valleys programme area.

Mr. David Hunt: The table shows unadjusted numbers and rates of long-term unemployed for the years and areas requested.

April	Valleys area Number	[1]Rate	Wales Number	[1]Rate	United Kingdom Number	[1]Rate
1988	13,937	5·7	52,057	4·1	1,029,206	3·6
1989	10,544	4·3	36,504	2·8	744,120	2·6
1990	7,111	3·0	24,606	1·9	539,725	1·9
1991	7,583	3·1	25,626	2·0	555,057	2·0
1992	11,385	4·7	39,436	3·0	840,849	3·0

Source: Employment Department.
[1] The long-term unemployed (ie for more than 52 weeks) expressed as a percentage of the total work force.

A465

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give figures for the number of *(a)* reported motor accidents and *(b)* deaths for each year since 1979 on the section of the A465 between Aberdulais and Glynneath.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The number of accidents involving personal injury and the number of deaths resulting from these accidents on the stretch of the A465 between Aberdulais, junction with A4109, and Glynneath, junction with B4242, are given in the table:

	Number of accidents[1]	Number killed
1979	23	2
1980	13	—
1981	10	—
1982	27	1
1983	11	1
1984	14	4
1985	18	2
1986	18	3
1987	10	—
1988	14	3
1989	19	1
1990	36	3
[2]1991	25	3

[1] Excluding those where there was no personal injury—for which no information is available.
[2] Provisional.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the start date for construction of the missing link of the A465 between Aberdulais and Glynneath.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The scheme is planned to start in the current financial year. That is contingent on the management of the trunk road programme as a whole.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the fatal road accident on the A465 at Resolven on Saturday 30 May.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The accident involved three cars and occurred on a double bend in the late afternoon during wet weather. Two of the occupants were killed, four seriously injured and two slightly injured. An investigation will be carried out when full details are available.

Ancient Woodland

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to double the planting of native broadleaf species in those counties which have lost one third of their ancient woodland since 1930.

Mr. David Hunt: The area of broadleaves planted in Wales has more than trebled over the last decade. A total of 450 hectares of broadleaves have, on average, been planted each year during the last five years, as compared with an average of 120 hectares during the previous seven years. Nearly all the planting was carried out with native species.

The Government's policy is that there should be a continuing expansion of the area of native woodland in Wales.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether sites of special scientific interest which may include ancient woodland will, in future, be protected from any depradation by agriculture, quarrying or any other activity.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Sites of special scientific interest are already protected under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The joint Welsh Office/Department of the Environment circular No. 1/92 "Planning Controls over Sites of Special Scientific Interest", which took effect from 2 January 1992, announced further planning safeguards for these areas.

Earnings

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will show the gross weekly earnings of full-time adult employees in Wales as a percentage of the British average in 1980, 1985, and 1990 for *(a)* males and *(b)* females.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is given in the table:

Average gross weekly earnings[1]
Wales as a percentage of Great Britain

April	Male	Female
[2]1980	95·7	95·7
[3]1985	93·1	94·0
[3]1990	87·5	89·5

Source: New Earnings Surveys
[1] Full-time employees whose pay for the survey period was not affected by absence
[2] Men aged 21 and over, women 18 and over
[3] All on adult rates

School Governors

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will detail the action he has taken or proposes to take to recruit school governors in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The year 1992 marks the end of the first four-year term for governors who were appointed in the wake of the Education Reform Act. Some 13,000 school governorships in Wales come up for renewal later this year. While I hope that many existing governors will wish to put their names forward for a further four-year term, I anticipate that there will be many opportunities for others to become governors for the first time.

We have, therefore, produced bilingual leaflets and posters together with a Welsh language video which local authorities and schools will be using as part of their efforts to encourage parents and others to become school governors. Local education authorities and schools are also working hard to ensure that all vacancies are filled.

We all have an interest in ensuring that our children have a good education—the future is in their hands. I hope that as many people as possible will take the opportunity that presents itself this year to put their name forward and become involved in the running of their local school. It is a very rewarding job.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Lockerbie Bombing

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress he has made in his contacts with the Government of Libya over the transfer from Libya of the two persons suspected of involvement in the Lockerbie air disaster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are continuing our efforts to persuade the Libyan Government to comply with our request, endorsed by UN Security Council resolution 731, to hand over the two Lockerbie suspects for trial in Scotland or the United States. If Libya does not implement this resolution, the sanctions regime imposed under Security Council resolution 748 will remain in place.

Refuseniks

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Arkady German and his family, of St. Petersburg.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can consider raising with the Russian authorities the case of Arkady German and his family, but to make effective representations we would need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Mark Grunkin and his family of Krasnogorsk.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can consider raising with the Russian authorities the case of Mark Grunkin and his family, but to make effective representations we would need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Arkady Gordon and his family, of St. Petersburg.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can consider raising with the Russian authorities the case of Arkady Gordon and his family, but to make effective representations we would need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Alexander Gekker and his family, of Kishinev.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can consider raising with the Moldovan authorities the case of Alexander Gekker and his family, but to make effective representations we would need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Alexander Melnikov and his family, of Apotity.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can consider raising with the Russian authorities the case of Alexander Melnikov and his family, but to make effective representations we would need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Alfred Rafalovich and his family, of St. Petersburg.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can consider raising with the Russian authorities the case of Alfred Rafalovich and his family, but to make effective representations we would need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Dmitri Yakubovsky and his family, of Kiev.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We made several representations to the authorities in Ukraine on behalf of Dmitri Yakubovsky and his family; the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed us in March that he had received permission to leave the country.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusnik Leib Levin and his family, of Ust Kamenogorsk.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We made several representations on behalf of Leib Levin and his family; we understand that he has now received permission to leave Kazakhstan.

Human Rights Conference

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the forthcoming United Nations world conference on human rights.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom is closely involved with EC and other like-minded countries in the preparatory process leading to the world conference on human rights, due to be held in Vienna from 14 to 25 June 1993. The United Kingdom attaches particular importance to agreement on better implementation of international human rights standards.

"Guardian" Ban

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of the Republic of Ireland following the ban on the sale of the British *Guardian* newspaper in the Republic on Thursday 21 May.

Mr. Hurd: None. No approach was made to Her Majesty's Government by *The Guardian* newspaper or by others directly involved.

Young Endeavour

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports have been received from the Australian Government on the training and use of Young Endeavour.

Mr. Goodlad: The board of the Young Endeavour youth scheme produces an annual report, and makes a copy available to the British Government.

Since being presented to Australia in January 1988 the ship has carried more than 2,000 young Australians on 10-day sail training voyages, and 1,650 disabled young people on shorter trips. It has also called at numerous ports around Australia and been visited by approximately 20,000 members of the public each year. In addition, the vessel undertakes flagship duties such as going to Auckland for the Commonwealth games in 1990 and representing Australia in the present grand regatta Columbus.

Dependent Territories (Investments)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out his policy and advice to Ministers of Finance in the United Kingdom's dependent territories on *(a)* the tendering for and appointment of investment advisers and *(b)* the tendering for and appointment of investment performance monitors.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Responsibility for the tendering for an appointment of investment advisers and investment

performance monitors for the United Kingdom's dependent territories rests with the Minister of Finance, or equivalent official, of each territory. Dependent territories wishing to recruit such advisers will do so on the basis of local legislation and regulations.

Newspaper Distribution

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the application of protocol 17 of the Maastricht treaty as it applies to freedom of distribution of United Kingdom newspapers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The protocol to which the right hon. Member refers is, of course, not yet in force. On 2 May, European Community Foreign Ministers agreed a legal interpretation and solemn declaration stating that it was not their intention that the protocol should limit the freedom to travel and the right to information about services legally available in other member states, as I told my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on 13 May. I understand that the Government of the Irish Republic intend to hold a referendum later this year on an amendment to their constitution to confirm this.

Iran

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy with regard to the export of military equipment to Iran.

Mr. Douglas-Hogg: The guidelines relating to all deliveries of defence equipment to Iran were set by the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 29 October 1985. They remain strictly enforced.

Tamil Refugees

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Indian Government concerning the enforced repatriation of Tamil refugees from Tamil Nadu to Sri Lanka.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None. The Indian Government temporarily suspended repatriation of Tamil refugees from Tamil Nadu to Sri Lanka on 15 May.

Ceremonial Dress

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to his answer of 13 May, *Official Report*, column *110*, if he will itemise the expenditure on ceremonial dress for 1991-92.

Mr. Goodlad: Ceremonial dress for HM representatives cost as follows:

	£
Bangladesh	2,735
Holy See	3,193
Kathmandu	615
Luxembourg	3,440
Stockholm	2,613
British Virgin Islands	2,725
Kuala Lumpur	756

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what use is to be made of the ceremonial dress normally reserved for the Governor of Hong Kong.

Mr. Goodlad: As I said in reply to the hon. Member's question on 13 May, Mr. Patten does not propose to wear ceremonial dress. None has therefore been made for him.

HEALTH

Child Protection Units

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the staffing numbers for each local authority child protection unit in England and Wales; and what they were in 1979.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not held currently.

Organ Transplants

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will bring forward proposals to amend the Human Organ Transplants Act 1989 further to provide for the circumstances in which an organ may be retrieved from a dead person for the purposes of transplant, to require the anonymity of the donor and the recipient, to define death for the purposes of that Act of 1989 as the total and irreversible loss of brain function and for connected purposes.

Mr. Sackville: No. Conditions for the removal of human organs from dead people for transplantation are provided in the Human Tissue Act 1961. The anonymity of the donor and recipient is covered by the common law principle of patient confidentiality which applies to all medical information. The determination of death is a matter for the clinical judgment of doctors. Brain stem death criteria have been accepted by the medical profession as conclusive evidence of death and are already applied for the purposes of organ retrieval.

Dental Treatment

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the effect on the availability of national health service dental care in Staffordshire of his Department's proposals to cut fees to national health service dental practitioners; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have made fair and reasonable proposals on dentists' remuneration which are being considered by the dental rates study group. These proposals would lead to the average dentist receiving in 1992-93 not just the 8·5 per cent. increase in pay recommended by the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration—and accepted in full by the Government—but some £5,000 in the full year in addition. We see no reason why such an offer should adversely affect the availability of the national health service dental care in Staffordshire, or elsewhere.

Food Hygiene

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is Her Majesty's Government's policy with regard to the proposals in the EC draft directive on the hygiene of foodstuffs; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the current EC legislation which governs the safety of mail order foods by means of a voluntary code of guidance.

Mr. Sackville: The Government welcome the EC Commission's proposal for a directive on the hygiene of foodstuffs as an important step in securing harmonised food hygiene standards throughout the Community. There is no current EC legislation dealing specifically with the safety of mail order foods.

Chernobyl

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has of the effect on deaths of children from cancer of the thyroid caused by contamination of the milk supply following the Chernobyl explosion.

Mr. Sackville: Figures for the United Kingdom show that no children died from cancer of the thyroid in respect of the period 1986-90. The Department is not aware of any evidence which demonstrates that any medical effects have occurred in the United Kingdom as a result of radiation exposures from the Chernobyl accident.

Care Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what methods she is using to project the numbers of persons likely to require residential or nursing home care after April 1993; and what conclusions she has reached.

Mr. Yeo: We currently estimate that about 110,000 people annually would have permanently entered independent residential care or nursing homes if the system of higher levels of income support had continued. This figure has regard to the growth in numbers under the present system and turnover rates estimated from the results of recent surveys about the characteristics of people living in residential care and nursing homes, including length of stay. We shall keep this estimate under review as further information becomes available. All such estimates have a margin of error. The actual number of people admitted to residential care and nursing homes under local authority auspices from April 1993 will depend on an assessment by authorities of their care needs.

South Birmingham Health Authority

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide details of the deficit reported by South Birmingham health authority for the last financial year.

Mr. Sackville: The deficit for South Birmingham in 1991-92 is currently estimated to be approximately £10·5 million. Of this, £4 million relates to excess creditors carried forward from 1990-91 and the remaining £6·5 million to overspending in 1991-92.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by how much the West Midlands regional health authority agreed to increase South Birmingham health authority's allocation in the last financial year; and what understandings were reached on compensating reductions for later years.

Mr. Sackville: South Birmingham health authority received an additional £15 million in the 1991-92 financial year, which was the best estimate, at that time, of the district's financial deficit. The additional funding was provided on the understanding that there would be a complete investigation into the cause and scale of the deficit. The district has agreed to take action to restore an income and expenditure balance. Any further actions which may be needed, must await the results of the investigation and subsequent discussions between the regional health authority and South Birmingham health authority.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library a copy of the KPMG Peat Marwick report on South Birmingham health authority.

Mr. Sackville: KPMG Peat Marwick has not yet completed its report.

Asthma

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to her reply on 2 June, *Official Report*, column *465*, what information is held by her Department on the incidence of asthma among children; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Figures on the incidence of asthma amongst children are not held centrally, but it is estimated that upwards of 700,000 children and adolescents under the age of 16 in the United Kingdom are affected by the condition.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information his Department holds on the possible links between child asthma and vehicle pollution due to exhaust emissions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Asthma is an ill-understood disease. The role of air pollutants in affecting the interplay between genetic and environmental factors, such as exposure to vehicle emissions is unclear. Research is being carried out into factors contributing to the rise of asthma, but no clear conclusions have emerged.

The Advisory Group on the Medical Aspects of Air Pollution Episodes looked at the evidence linking ozone levels with asthma and concluded that the data were not persuasive. The group will soon examine other possible associations with asthma and other respiratory diseases.

Birth Statistics

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children were born in the United Kingdom in the last five years, for which records are available, to mothers aged 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 years, respectively; how many and what percentage of those mothers of age 16 years and over were married to the father of the child at the time of birth; and what is her estimate of the number and proportion of babies born to mothers aged 14 to 16 years which are being cared for by grandparents or other relatives.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested relating to live births is as follows:

Live births in the United Kingdom 1986-90

Year of birth of child and age of mother at birth	*Total births*	*Births inside marriage*	*Percentage inside marriage*
1986			
14	208	—	—
15	1,279	—	—

Year of birth of child and age of mother at birth	Total births	Births inside marriage	Percentage inside marriage
16	4,972	531	10·7
17	12,321	2,415	19·6
18	20,094	6,257	31·1
1987			
14	200	—	—
15	1,235	—	—
16	5,063	441	8·7
17	12,141	2,043	16·8
18	20,141	5,237	26·0
1988			
14	217	—	—
15	1,205	—	—
16	5,159	396	7·7
17	12,775	1,759	13·8
18	20,060	4,709	23·5
1989			
14	198	—	—
15	1,246	—	—
16	4,865	316	6·5
17	11,798	1,381	11·7
18	19,394	3,959	20·4
1990			
14	211	—	—
15	1,237	—	—
16	4,713	260	5·5
17	11,819	1,231	10·4
18	18,797	3,504	18·6

No information is available on the numbers or proportions of babies cared for by relatives.

Community Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has any proposals to further postpone the implementation of the community care reforms.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), on 12 May at column *81*.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish her estimates of the cost to local authorities of community care in 1993-94; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is being considered in the public expenditure survey. We are committed to resourcing community care fairly.

Dentists and General Practitioners

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the average net pay of *(a)* dentists and *(b)* general practitioners for each of the last five years; and what is the projected figure for 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body recommends to Government the target average net income for dentists and the intended average income for doctors.

The target average net income of general dental practitioners and the intended average income of general medical practitioners since 1987-88 are as follows:

	General dental practitioners £	General medical practitioners £
1 April 1987 to 31 March 1988	23,220	26,840
1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989	24,920	28,800
1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990	26,915	31,105
1 April 1990 to 31 December 1990	28,800	33,280
1 January 1991 to 31 March 1991	29,740	34,680
1 April 1991 to 30 November 1991	31,970	37,280
1 December 1991 to 31 March 1992	33,010	37,975
1 April 1992 to 31 March 1993	35,815	40,010

Electro-convulsive Therapy

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will ensure that ECT is never administered to anyone under 18 years of age.

Mr. Yeo: Treatment decisions are a matter for clinical judgment. Electro-convulsive therapy is rarely used for people under 18 years of age, but can be the appropriate treatment in certain circumstances.

Domestic Fires

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many men, women, children and pensioners died in fires in their homes during each of the last five years for which records are available, in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

The available information relates to deaths in fires attended by local authority fire brigades between 1986 and 1990 and is shown in the table.

Table
Fatal casualties from fires in dwellings attended by local authority fire brigades by sex[1] and country 1986-90

Country	All ages			Children[2]			Pensioners[3]		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
England									
1986	568	266	302	105	61	44	277	92	185
1987	510	246	264	82	53	29	261	85	176
1988	532	288	244	83	40	43	242	106	136
1989	514	269	245	90	46	44	235	95	140
1990	478	263	214	74	44	30	222	92	130
Wales									
1986	26	14	12	3	1	2	17	9	8

Country	All ages Total	All ages Male	All ages Female	Children[2] Total	Children[2] Male	Children[2] Female	Pensioners[3] Total	Pensioners[3] Male	Pensioners[3] Female
1987	38	17	21	6	4	2	18	4	14
1988	36	17	19	11	6	5	17	5	12
1989	26	17	9	8	4	4	4	2	2
1990	21	10	11	6	4	2	10	2	8
Scotland									
1986	132	72	60	12	8	4	63	22	41
1987	138	79	59	24	14	10	62	28	34
1988	146	74	72	25	12	13	69	30	39
1989	88	45	43	11	4	7	43	20	23
1990	115	59	55	3	0	3	45	20	25
Northern Ireland									
1986	27	14	13	2	1	1	12	5	7
1987	24	8	16	7	2	5	8	2	6
1988	18	8	10	2	0	2	9	5	4
1989	14	8	6	3	2	1	5	1	4
1990	13	8	5	2	2	0	4	2	2

[1] The Total column includes some casualties of unspecified sex.
[2] Children are classified as those aged 0–16.
[3] Pensioners are classified as aged 65 and over for males and aged 60 and over for females.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many men, women, children and pensioners, respectively, were injured in fires in their homes during each of the last five years for which records are available, in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, respectively.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

The available information relates to casualties in fires attended by local authority fire brigades between 1986 and 1990 and is shown in the table.

Table
Non-fatal casualties from fires in dwellings attended by local authority fire brigades by sex[1] and country
1986-90

Country	All ages Total	All ages Male	All ages Female	Children[2] Total	Children[2] Male	Children[2] Female	Pensioners[3] Total	Pensioners[3] Male	Pensioners[3] Female
England									
1986	7,262	3,938	3,275	1,194	635	559	1,722	653	1,069
1987	7,476	4,050	3,411	1,176	641	535	1,799	663	1,136
1988	7,882	4,296	3,577	1,317	736	579	1,791	651	1,140
1989	8,076	4,408	3,655	1,399	762	636	1,821	677	1,144
1990	8,080	4,471	3,594	1,383	774	608	1,764	687	1,077
Wales									
1986	356	195	161	42	17	25	66	26	40
1987	398	215	178	64	30	34	90	34	56
1988	475	233	236	108	50	58	98	33	65
1989	446	233	210	80	39	40	97	31	66
1990	466	261	203	93	53	40	81	29	52
Scotland									
1986	1,499	843	655	212	105	107	311	125	186
1987	1,372	776	596	204	112	92	292	108	184
1988	1,591	862	727	265	136	129	357	143	214
1989	1,605	869	736	247	133	114	367	141	226
1990	1,624	894	728	263	129	134	331	142	189
Northern Ireland									
1986	286	174	112	44	20	24	47	18	29
1987	230	130	100	57	31	26	31	14	17
1988	230	137	93	48	29	19	33	13	20
1989	261	161	100	38	24	14	37	19	18
1990	287	160	125	64	31	33	28	13	15

[1] The Total column includes some casualties of unspecified sex.
[2] Children are classified as those aged 0–16.
[3] Pensioners are classified as aged 65 and over for males and aged 60 and over for females.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths she estimates occur each year in the United Kingdom due to the inhalation of smoke.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

The available information is published in table 7 of the Home Office report, "Fire Statistics United Kingdom 1990", a copy of which is in the Library. Details of the cause of death come from fire brigade records of fires they attend, updated where possible by information from the death certificate.

DEFENCE

Navigational Marks

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those navigational buoys and marks in the Solent which the Royal Navy provides and maintains.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is as follows.

Name	*Position*
W. Princessa	50 40 12N 1 03 57W
Bembridge	50 41 07N 1 02 43W
Nab End	50 42 48N 0 59 23W
Nab East	50 42 48N 1 42 00W
Dean Tail	50 43 01N 0 59 01W
Dean Elbow	50 43 33N 1 01 50W
Warner	50 43 50·5N 1 03 56W
Horse Elbow	50 44 14N 1 03 48W
Cambrian Wk	50 44 14N 1 03 56W
Invincible Wk	50 44·34N 1 02·23W
ASWE 1	50 46·7N 1 02·06W
ASWE 2	50 46·13N 1 02·02W
ASWE 3	50 46·69N 1 02·22W
ASWE 6	50 45·18N 1 02·00W
Langstone F	50 46·17N 1 01 16·5W
Winner	50 45 04N 1 00 00W
Saddle	50 45 00N 1 00 00W
Horse Sand	50 45 29N 1 04 40W
OSB	50 45 33N 1 05 25W
Boyne	50 46 11N 1 05 18W
Spit Refuge	50 46 11N 1 05 22W
Castle	50 46 26N 1 05 18W
Ridge	50 46 26N 1 05 34W
1 Bar	50 46 44N 1 05 43W
2 Bar	50 46·66N 1 05·58W
3 Bar	50 47 02·5N 1 06 10W
4 Bar	50 46 58·5N 1 06 16W
Ballast	50 47 38N 1 06 16W
Stokes Bay Pier	50 46·58N 1 09·00W
N. Sturbridge	50 45 18N 1 08 09W
N.E. Mining Gd	50 44 42N 1 06 18W
S.W. Mining Gd	50 44·38N 1 06·57W
Stokes Bay	50 46 40N 1 10 35W
Browndown	50 46 32·5N 1 10 52W
E. Bramble	50 47 12N 1 13 33W
N. Ryde Middle	50 46 35N 1 14 18W
W. Ryde Middle	50 46 27N 1 15 42W
S. Ryde Middle	50 46 06N 1 14 05W
NE Ryde Middle	50 46 11N 1 11 48W
SE Ryde Middle	50 45 54N 1 12 00W
Norris	50 45 55N 1 15 24 W
Peel Bank	50 45 34N 1 13 15W
Peel Wk	50 44 51N 1 13 18W
Mother Bank	50 45 27N 1 11 08W
Flag 'T'	50 43·19N 0 59·30W
Flag 'T'	50 43 01N 0 59·18W
Flag 'T'	50 42·88N 0 59·49W
Flag 'T'	50 43·06N 0 59·77W
Mary Rose	50 45 46N 1 06 10W
Gamma	50 46·34N 1 06·00W
Delta	50 46·01N 1 06·20W
Echo	50 46·09N 1 05·37W
Lucas	50 46·23N 1 08·67W
Alpha	50 46 35N 1 07 30W
Beta	50 46·37N 1 06·25W
Kemps	50 45·15N 1 9·55W
Bowring Rose	50 47·28N 1 12·00W
Ratsey	50 47 63N 1 13·57W
DAKS Simpson	50 45·5N 1 14·3W
Foul Ground 1	50 48·85N 1 07·09W
Foul Ground 2	50 48·93N 1 07·09W
Mobel	50 46·13N 1 13·00W

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the policy reasons for the provision of buoyage by the Royal Navy in the Solent.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Queen's harbour master provides and maintains navigation buoys in the Solent as required by schedule 1, regulation 1 of the Dockyard Port of Portsmouth Act 1978.

Cambodia

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by *(a)* rank and *(b)* armed service the 35 British military observers who are joining the United Nations land operation in Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are providing a total of 38 military observers for the United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia comprising, from the Army, seven lieutenant colonels, 15 majors and 10 captains; from the Royal Air Force, one wing commander, one squadron leader and three flight lieutenants; and from the Royal Marines, one captain.

NAAFI profits

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence by what method the use of NAAFI profits for sporting purposes within the armed forces is determined.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Units of the armed forces are paid a rebate, at rates agreed by the NAAFI council, on total sales at retail prices in junior ranks clubs. The rebate may be spent on improving the amenities of clubs or any purpose that collectively benefits service personnel, including sports. Within these guidelines, use of the rebate is at the discretion of unit commanders.

Low Flying

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been paid by his Department in compensation to individuals in terms of *(a)* personal injury both physical and mental and *(b)* for damage to property arising from low-flying aircraft in each of the last three financial years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Statistics regarding compensation for low flying aircraft activity are not available in the format requested. The following is a breakdown of overall expenditure for claims relating to low-flying aircraft activity:

	£
1989-90	356,000
1990-91	429,000
1991-92	441,000

RAF Brawdy

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what specific statement was made by his predecessor on the future of Flight B202 Squadron search and rescue at RAF Brawdy in the press conference held at the Welsh Office, Cathays park, Cardiff, on 24 January.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am not aware that my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) made any statement at the press conference on 24 January, concerning search and rescue at RAF Brawdy. Final decisions on the structure and basing of the military search and rescue force have yet to be taken. It is, therefore, too early to say what the implications will be for the provision of search and rescue at RAF Brawdy.

Thames House

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give further details of the works on Thames house, as shown in table 1 of class I, votes 1, 2, 4 and 5 of the supply estimates 1992-93—HC 273-I—showing which parts of his Department will be occupying the building; and which buildings currently in use will be thereby vacated.

Mr. Aitken *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment stated in his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) on 5 June, at column *667*, Thames house is being refurbished principally for occupation by the Security Service. The Ministry of Defence has no plans to occupy the building.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 9 June 1992

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Rudolf Hess

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Attorney-General if he will now place in the Library a copy of the Jones report into the alleged irregularities surrounding the death of Rudolf Hess in Spandau gaol in August 1987.

The Attorney-General: No. The document which the hon. Member refers to as the Jones report is a report submitted by the Metropolitan police to the Director of Public Prosecutions setting out the result of a police investigation into an alleged criminal offence. Such reports are confidential.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Small Shops

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next plans to meet OPEN, the small shops group.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am considering whether it may be mutually helpful to meet representatives of OPEN later this year.

Sunday Trading

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will undertake to set out the Government's proposed reforms of the Shops Act 1950 before the end of 1992; and if he will make a statement.

(2) whether he has any plans to publish, in broad terms, the reforms he would favour in the Shops Act 1950; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We certainly hope to be able to fulfil before the end of this year our commitment to publishing proposals for reform of the Shops Act 1950 once the legal position is clear. Judgment by the European Court of Justice on the compatibility of the current law on Sunday trading in England and Wales with Community law is at present expected in the early autumn.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners and remand prisoners at Durham prison were transferred to the care of hospitals in each month of the last two years; how many of such prisoners required *(a)* physical restraint such as handcuffs and *(b)* constant supervision by local police; what recompense has been made by the prison authorities as a health care purchaser to the providing hospitals; and what is the scale of charges that forms the basis of recompense.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of prisoners at Durham prison transferred to hospitals in each month of the year 1991-92 is as follows. Figures are not available for the previous year.

1991-92	*Number*
April	9
May	6
June	10
July	6
August	9
September	9
October	14
November	8
December	6
January	6
February	8
March	6
Total	97

All such prisoners were handcuffed to staff on the journey to hospital except where the medical conditions precluded this. None of thse prisoners required constant supervision by the police. Where patient care is provided to prisoners in national health service facilities, the costs are a matter for the prisoner's district health authority of origin.

Intelligence Data

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will place the specification of the computer for the national criminal intelligence service in the Library;

(2) if he will describe each separate index of personal data stored on the computer for the national criminal intelligence service; how many items of data are stored under each index; what is the number of entries in each index; and how many accesses to each index are expected over the coming year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The computer system to support the national criminal intelligence service is still being developed and the functional specification has not yet been finalised.

Nuclear Weapons Convoys (Accidents)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement as to how senior fire officers are being currently trained to deal with an accident involving a nuclear weapons road convoy; and what future training is being considered.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Training for senior officers of fire brigades in contingency planning and co-ordination of the emergency services' action continues to be provided by the Ministry of Defence and at the Fire Service college, which supplements the training in brigades to deal with incidents involving radioactivity.

Attacks on Police

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to bring forward proposals to strengthen legislation to punish those who attack and injure policemen carrying out their duties.

Mr. Jack: No. The courts already have strong powers to deal with those who attack and injure police officers and

the Court of Appeal has made it clear that they should use them. The results of a survey of sentences imposed in the last six months of 1991 for assaults on the police demonstrated that the courts recognise that such assaults are despicable and deserve to be punished severely. Immediate custody was imposed for a significantly higher proportion of the assaults on the police covered in the survey than for assaults on all victims in 1990.

Derek Bentley

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received from Mr. David Yallop concerning a posthumous pardon to Derek Bentley: and what reply he has sent.

Mr. Jack: Mr. Yallop wrote on 14 August 1991 referring to his book "To Encourage The Others" on the case of Derek Bentley and requesting an independent, public inquiry into the case. He was told that the contents of his book would be taken into account and that once inquiries were completed, the Secretary of State would be in a position to decide whether any further action on his part was necessary.

Mr. Yallop wrote on 21 May inquiring when the outcome of our consideration of the case would be announced. He has been informed that, in addition to the contents of his book, careful consideration is being given to a great deal of other material, including a letter and dossier received on 1 June from solicitors acting for Miss Iris Bentley. He has been advised that an announcement will be made as soon as the Secretary of State is in a position to decide whether any action on his part is justified.

County Council Elections

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received requesting the postponement or cancellation of county council elections due to be held in Wales in May 1993.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No such representations have been received by me. However, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has been approached by both local authority associations in Wales. Decisions on this matter have not yet been made.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is considering instituting the necessary parliamentary action to postpone or cancel the county council elections due to be held in Wales in May 1993.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No decisions have yet been taken in this matter.

Urban Crime Fund

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will increase the level of funding provided to the Northumbria police force for the urban crime fund initiative.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the original level of funding indicated to the Northumbria police force for the urban crime fund initiative; and what was the figure finally approved.

Mr. Charles Wardle: When the urban crime fund initiative was launched on 26 November, it was announced that the three police authorities to benefit would each be eligible for additional funding of up to £3·66 million.

At the request of the three police authorities concerned, it has been agreed that £3·9 million, £1·3 million for each authority, of the total of £11 million revenue provision may be used for capital projects. The total Exchequer contribution remains unchanged at £11 million.

Immigration Office, Glasgow

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Glasgow immigration office will be reopened.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Glasgow immigration public inquiry office will be reopened as soon as possible.

Immigration

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to enable a more flexible transition from temporary immigration permission for the purpose of unpaid child minder for close relatives on compassionate grounds to working holiday visa and vice versa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A person who wishes to come to the United Kingdom for a short period to care for a sick or elderly relative may be admitted as a visitor under the Immigration Rules provided that the immigration officer is satisfied among other things that it will not constitute employment, paid or unpaid, and that the passenger is genuinely seeking entry for the period of the visit as stated. A person who has been admitted as a visitor may qualify to stay on in the United Kingdom as a working holidaymaker if he or she is a young Commonwealth citizen aged 17 to 27 inclusive and meets the other requirements of the rules relating to the working holidaymaker scheme, and vice versa.

Correspondence

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to reply to the letter from Stuart Bower sent to his Department on 10 February.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A reply to Mr. Bower's letter has now been sent by my officials. I apologise to Mr. Bower for the delay in replying.

International Fraud

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will raise with his counterparts in other European Community and OECD countries the case for binding international agreements to allow investigation of bank accounts in the course of inquiries into international financial fraud.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 5 June 1992]:* We already have arrangements to allow our investigators to pursue financial inquiries overseas. The Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990 enables us to provide full mutual legal assistance to other countries, including evidence concerning bank accounts, and to obtain such assistance from overseas. In addition, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the director

of the Serious Fraud Office have powers of their own to investigate international frauds. And we shall shortly be introducing new legislation to extend the jurisdiction of our courts in relation to fraud committed across national boundaries.

We accept, both in principle and in practice, that bank secrecy should be lifted to allow the investigation of criminal offences. We have argued at the international level, most recently through our membership of the financial action task force on money laundering, against the use of bank secrecy to inhibit action against international criminal activity including money laundering and financial fraud.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Guinness Trials

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, how much legal aid has been paid to the defendants in the Guinness trials.

Mr. John M. Taylor: To date, over £1·3 million has been paid out of legal aid towards the Crown court costs of the defence in the Guinness trials. However, not all of the expected claims for costs from legal aid or central funds have yet been received by the court and the final amount is yet to be determined.

Legal Aid

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if a defendant has disposed of the proceeds of the sale of his home, how this affects his eligibility for legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The legal aid regulations provide that if it appears that an applicant for legal aid has deprived himself of or converted any resources in order to reduce the amount of his disposable capital, whether to reduce his liability to pay a contribution towards legal aid or otherwise, these resources shall be treated as part of his resources. Consequently, the applicant may be found to be ineligible for legal aid on financial grounds or any contribution to be paid will be based on the total resources he is deemed to have.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Banks (Audits)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any proposals for legislation under which all banks operating in the United Kingdom would be required to have *(a)* independent audit committees and *(b)* internal audit departments.

Mr. Nelson: The Bank of England's "Banking Act Report 1987-88", laid before the House on 18 May 1988, and the bank's "Statement of Principles" make it clear that the bank is committed to United Kingdom-based banking groups having independent audit committees where this is feasible. The bank also reviews the value of internal audit arrangements when assessing a bank's control and management systems.

Council Tax

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the domestic valuations submitted by estate agents for the new council tax have been rejected by the Inland Revenue Valuation Office.

Mr. Dorrell: Private contractors are required to value band domestic properties issued in batches and, as at 29 May 1992, 6·3 per cent. of all batches returned to the Valuation Office agency had been rejected.

Passenger Transport (VAT)

Mr. Snape: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he intends to maintain the zero-rating of value added tax on passenger transport after 1997.

Sir John Cope: The Government have maintained, during the single market negotiations, our right to retain the coverage of our current zero rates including domestic passenger transport. The present agreement reached by Finance Ministers covers the period until 1997 without prejudice to what happens thereafter.

Advance Corporation Tax

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will issue a statement on the recoverability of advance corporation tax; how many companies have sought clearance before the payment of a group dividend with advance corporation tax attaching; how many are awaiting clearance; and what is the average waiting time for clearance.

Mr. Dorrell: Advance corporation tax—ACT—paid by a company in respect of a dividend or other qualifying distribution made in an accounting period may, up to a limit, be set against the company's liability to corporation tax for the accounting period. Where a company has paid more ACT than it can set off in an accounting period, it may carry back the surplus to set against its liability to corporation tax in the previous six years, which may give rise to a repayment of corporation tax for those years. Surplus ACT may also be carried forward indefinitely against future liability to corporation tax.

Special rules exist to counteract artificial tax advantages, including payment of a tax credit, or non-paymnent of ACT attaching to a dividend, when certain transactions in securities are involved. Companies can seek a clearance from the Inland Revenue that these rules do not apply. In the year to 31 March 1992, the Inland Revenue received about 3,500 such applications, of which less than 10 per cent. involved dividends paid within a group of companies. The average number of all cases awaiting clearance at any time in the six months to 31 March 1992 was 157, most of which did not involve dividends. All cases are processed within 30 days.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the reasons for treating the recovery of advance corporation tax by subsidiaries of group companies differently from the treatment of group companies as one taxpayer.

Mr. Dorrell: Companies paying dividends within a group may elect not to pay advance corporation tax on them. Where, however, a parent company pays a dividend,

it must account for ACT. The parent may either set that ACT against its own liability to corporation tax, or may surrender it to a subsidiary, to be set off against the subsidiary's liability. This may lead to a repayment of corporation tax. Companies within groups may also be entitled to a credit for ACT suffered on the dividend income they receive.

Within a group, these provisions enable ACT to be paid only by the parent company and for that ACT to be set off against corporation tax within the group.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will increase the interest paid to premium bond holders over the next three years.

Mr. Nelson: The general level of interest rates has fallen substantially over the last 18 months. Against that background, I have no plans to increase the rate of interest used for the premium bond prize fund.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those business organisations he has consulted about the new aggregate sales listings for VAT and indicate their concerns.

Sir John Cope: Customs and Excise consulted businesses very widely. A list is currently being prepared and I shall write to my hon. Friend when it is complete.

The concerns expressed related to compliance costs and burdens on businesses, and the potential for abuse of commercially sensitive information. These were taken fully into account in EC negotiations, where some significant simplifications were achieved; and in the measures to implement these arrangements in the United Kingdom.

Intelligence Data

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many of the 22 Departments and non-departmental agencies that use the Government data network interchange personal data between themselves via the GDN; and how many of these interchanges are a consequence of using the GDN.

Mr. Nelson: Sixteen arrangements for interdepartmental transfer of personal data have been authorised. All are exchanges of staff pay and personnel information between Chessington computer centre and customer departments and use GDN as a means of meeting established requirements. Twenty-nine departments or non-departmental bodies now have access agreements with Racal Data Networks Limited to use GDN.

Cheques Act 1992

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what publicity he is arranging on the effect of the Cheques Act 1992 *(a)* generally, *(b)* in cattle auctions, *(c)* in furniture and art auctions and *(d)* in motor trade auctions.

Mr. Nelson: A press release explaining the effects of the Cheques Act 1992 will be issued on 16 June when the Act comes into effect three months after Royal Assent was given.

Aquatic Environment

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the responsibilities and duties of his Department and the Crown Estate, in relation to inshore waters, intertidal areas and maritime land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Treasury has no such responsibilities or duties.

Where the Crown Estate is the owner of the sea-bed or foreshore in inshore waters, intertidal areas and maritime land, it fulfils its responsibilities and duties set out in the Crown Estate Act 1961. It also has certain regulatory functions in respect of marine aggregate extraction and fish farming.

BCCI

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Government have yet received from Lord Justice Bingham a copy of or extracts from his report on BCCI.

Mr. Nelson: Lord Justice Bingham has not yet completed his report into the inquiry. Her Majesty's Treasury has received from the inquiry, in accordance with its stated procedures, draft factual passages which are relevant to the responsibilities of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Debtor Countries

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to set up a fund to retire debts owed to commercial banks by lower income countries.

Mr. Nelson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd) on 15 May, at column *223*.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's arrangements for consulting the Data Protection Registrar during the planning stage of any initiative involving the collection, use or disclosure of personal data; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: My Department has a data protection co-ordinator responsible for ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1984. That officer maintains appropriate contact with the office of the Data Protection Registrar in all matters relating to the Act.

Mersey Tunnel

Mr. Alton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax was rebated last year to self-employed people claiming against their use of the Mersey tunnel; and what plans there are to extend rebates to all people in employment.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that this information is not available.

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much to date has been paid by Peter Clowes and Pamela Clowes on account of damages payable to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: A court order for interim payment of damages of £6 million was made on 13 April 1992 against Mr. and Mrs. Clowes. Enforcement has been stayed pending any appeal.

Carbon Tax

Mr. Gill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of a carbon tax upon employment prospects.

Sir John Cope: The impact of a carbon tax on employment prospects is highly uncertain and would depend on a range of factors. These include the precise nature of the tax and the use made of the additional revenues. However the net impact may well be small, with job losses in some energy-intensive industries offset by gains in other industries which use less energy.

Valuation Office

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what targets will be set for the Valuation Office executive agency for the year 1992-93.

Mr. Nelson: I have set the following key targets for the agency in 1992-93.

Operational Targets

Non-domestic rates: to clear 302,000 appeals against the 1990 List of rating valuations and to deal with 222,000 reassessment cases arising because properties have undergone physical changes.

Council Tax: to complete the valuation banding of domestic properties. The Agency will undertake 4·3 million valuations directly and supervise private sector contractors in the valuation of a further 4·8 million properties.

Direct Taxes: to undertake 120,000 valuation cases for the Inland Revenue concerning Inheritance and Capital Gains Taxes and Stamp Duty.

Other: to undertake 135,000 property and land valuations for other Government Departments, public bodies and local authorities.

Financial Performance and Cost Efficiency

to limit the Agency's net expenditure to its Main Estimates figure of £1·365 million; to achieve efficiency savings of approximately 2·5 per cent. on its gross expenditure; and to rationalise the number of its local offices from 121 to 113.

Citizens' Charter

to reply to 90 per cent. of all correspondence within 28 days of receipt; to publish a supplement to the Taxpayers' Charter to cover all Valuation Office work; and by June 1992 to complete a trial extension of local office opening hours.

Further details of the performance measures and targets are set out in the agency's business plan for 1992-93, a copy of which will be placed in the Library of the House on publication.

Relocation

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has for the terms on which civil servants are moved in the public interest.

Mr. Dorrell: At present civil servants moving home in the public interest are entitled to a wide range of financial assistance. This package will be improved for those small number of staff who find, as a result of their move, that the proceeds of the sale of their old property are not sufficient to repay their mortgage. Departments and agencies will have the freedom to offer such staff loans, at commercial rates of interest, repayable on the same terms as the existing scheme for making advances of salary for house purchases. Departments and agencies will also, in particularly difficult cases, be free to offer advances of salary to meet mortgage shortfalls, on the same terms as the advances of salary offered to meet bridging loan shortfalls.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Staff Salaries

Mr. Jopling: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Newham, North West (Mr. Banks) of 20 May, *Official Report*, column 143, what is the total monthly cost of the salaries and other costs to public funds of the staff in the Clerk's Department employed on duties principally related to departmental Select Committees.

Mr. Beith: The total monthly cost to public funds of the salaries and other expenses of staff in the Clerk's Department employed on duties principally related to departmental Select Committees is estimated to be £175,862. This figure includes superannuation and employer's national insurance contributions.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Earth Summit

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list *(a)* the number of officials by rank and grade and *(b)* the number of consultants attending the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, giving details of their class of travel and the total budgeted cost of the delegation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom delegation will consist of the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Minister for Overseas Development, the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, and 25 officials from DOE, FCO, ODA, DTI, and the Forestry Commission. Official gradings are:

	Number
Senior Grade	8
Counsellor/equivalent	5
First Secretary/equivalent	11
Third Secretary	1

In addition, there are five members of the delegation attached to our diplomatic posts in Brazil. Their gradings are:

	Number
Senior Grade	1
Counsellor	1
First Secretary	1
Second Secretary	2

Eight junior support staff will also attend the conference, as well as 12 non-governmental organisation —NGO—observers who will form part of the United Kingdom delegation.

The staff involved will be needed to service not only the plenary sessions of the conference but the specialised sectoral working groups that will be set up and where much of the detailed negotiating will be done. So far, eight informal working groups have been convened and others will be assembled if necessary. Other staff are required to provide office support facilities and to liaise with the local authorities over such matters as transport and security.

Ministers, their private secretaries and the ambassador to the United Nations will travel first class, all other delegates will travel club class. The estimated cost of the delegation's travel and subsistence, including hotel costs, will be about £190,000. NGOs will be responsible for their own travel and accommodation expenses.

The estimated total administrative cost of the conference, including office facilities, transport and communications, and so on will be about £500,000.

Albania

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance he has given the Albanian Government with regard to setting up a legal system and the establishment of a legal profession.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office paid the travel costs and expenses for a delegation from the British Albanian Legal Association to visit Tirana in April 1992 to hold seminars on the theory and practice of running a legal profession.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will extend the know how fund to Albania.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This is under active consideration.

Abu Dhabi

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the entertainment budget of the British ambassador in Abu Dhabi.

Mr. Goodlad: A total of £12,628 per annum.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much annual expenditure is incurred in respect of the British embassy in Abu Dhabi.

Mr. Goodlad: The latest confirmed figure, for 1990-91, is £1,345,935.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the number of vehicles owned by Her Majesty's Government or hired by Her Majesty's Government situated at the British embassy in Abu Dhabi.

Mr. Goodlad: There are five official vehicles at the British embassy in Abu Dhabi, three owned by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and two by the Ministry of Defence. Vehicles are hired to replace one of these only in the event of breakdown.

Refuseniks

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik David Aptecman and his family of Moscow.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can consider raising with the Russian authorities the case of David Aptecman and his family, but to make effective representations we would need further details.

Aquatic Environment

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the responsibilities and duties of his Department and any agency which reports to his Department in relation to inshore waters, intertidal areas and maritime land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has no direct responsibility for United Kingdom coastal policy, but provides advice to other Government Departments on the international implications of Her Majesty's Government's maritime policy and monitors the policy of other governments, particularly in relation to the law of the sea.

Antarctica

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to bring forward legislation to repeal the Antarctic Minerals Act 1989; and if he will make a statement on the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards Antarctica.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government are fully committed to implementation of the environmental protocol to the Antarctic treaty. Ratification of the protocol and repeal of the Antarctic Minerals Act 1989 will depend on the introduction of legislation to give effect to the provisions of the protocol.

We shall introduce legislation when the business of the House permits.

Croatia

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to establish diplomatic relations with Croatia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This is under active consideration.

Maastricht Treaty

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many copies of the Maastricht agreement have been made available to members of the public; and whether a charge was made for each copy.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: While the treaty on European union was being prepared for publication more than 1,000

copies of the text were made available to Parliament. Copies were also made available free of charge to members of the public on request from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Some 100 copies were sent out.

The treaty was published as a Command Paper—Cm 1934—on 7 May and is available from HMSO at a cost of £13·30. A total of 2,500 copies have been printed, of which 400 were sent to Parliament.

Yugoslav Assets

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he proposes to take to freeze assets of the former Republic of Yugoslavia, now controlled by Serbia, held in the United Kingom.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have been asked to reply.

Her Majesty's Treasury took action to block Serbian and Montenegran assets held in the United Kingdom with effect from 1 June. Directions were made under the Emergency Laws (Re-enactments and Repeals) Act 1964.

An Order in Council was made on 4 June which implements the full range of sanctions under United Nations Security Council resolution 757 and includes provisions covering the assets freeze secured by the Treasury directions.

PRIME MINISTER

Newham

Q6. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will pay an official visit to the London borough of Newham.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will be making further visits to many parts of the country and hopes to include different parts of London among them.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 June.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 June.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is visiting Colombia to have discussions with President Gavria on a wide range of issues. He will carry out other official duties including an inspection of an anti-narcotics police training school.

Earth Summit

Mr. Burns: To ask the Prime Minister what is his assessment of the likely outcome of the Earth summit in Rio.

The Prime Minister: I am committed to the success of the Earth summit and will attend the meeting with other world leaders.

We shall sign the framework convention on climate change and have joined with other members of the European Community in urging all countries to sign and ratify it as soon as possible thereafter. This convention will be a significant first step in tackling the global problems of climate change.

We shall also sign the convention on biodiversity, which should provide an initial step in protecting natural habitats and the range of species throughout the world. This will be subject to satisfactory arrangements that take full account of our concern about financial commitments.

We have already announced that we will provide new and additional financial resources through the global environment facility to assist developing countries in meeting the incremental costs of their commitments under the convention.

We hope that an effective statement of principles on the sustainable development of the world's forests will be agreed and a process to follow the principles up.

Agenda 21 provides a coherent framework for action by all to achieve more sustainable types of development and growth. We attach great importance to its agreement at the meeting. We hope that it will contain a declaration of basic principles and that stronger machinery will be established to carry forward work at a national and international level.

EDUCATION

International Education Programme

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information he has about the international educational programme which places students from abroad in United Kingdom schools.

Mr. Forman: The Intercultural Educational Programme—IEP—is a registered charity which promotes intercultural learning through exchange programmes for students, workers, teachers, families and youth groups throughout the world. IEP is the United Kingdom national office of AFS Intercultural Programs, an American based exchange organisation which has offices throughout the world.

As part of its activities, IEP organises placements which enable 15 to 18-year-old pupils from abroad to spend a period, usually one academic year, living with a British family and attending a local school. Similar placements are also organised for United Kingdom pupils abroad.

Dysentery

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement concerning the recent cases of dysentery at the school in Seaham in 1991 and the schools in Easington in 1992.

Mr. Forth: The matter is one for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. I understand, however, that there is no evidence to suggest that the reported cases originated at the schools attended by the children.

Ealing Schools

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to announce his decision on the schools' reorganisation proposals put to him by Ealing council and the churches; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend proposes to reach a decision on the outstanding proposals in respect of the county and voluntary schools as soon as possible after his

decision on the statutory proposals from the grant-maintained secondary schools to change their age of admission from 12 to 11. He hopes that will be in the course of the summer.

Higher Education

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will establish a quality audit of higher education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: The Government are committed to ensuring that effective quality assurance arrangements exist in higher education. One element, in line with the policy set out in Cm 1561, will be a United Kingdom-wide higher education quality council established by higher education institutions collectively. This will have three units, devoted to quality audit, quality enhancement and credit and access. The council has been developed in discussion with my Department. I am confident that it will do a good job.

European Cultural Commissioner

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what draft directives affecting what may be taught in schools are being considered by the Cultural Commissioner of the EEC.

Mr. Forman: None.

Further Education

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the aggregate number of students by full-time equivalent by college studying in further education colleges for the academic years 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Forman *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* The table gives the full-time equivalent student numbers for further education colleges which responded to the "Further Education Statistical Record" at November 1990. This information is not yet available for the academic year 1991-92.

Table showing full-time equivalent student numbers (FTEs) for each English further education college at November 1990

	Number
Kingsway Princeton College	1,969
Woolwich College	1,529
Cordwainers College	189
Hackney College	2,366
Hammersmith and West London College	2,893
City and East London College	1,903
North London College	1,446
Brixton College of Further Education	1,147
Vauxhall College of Building and Further Education	1,700
South London College	1,496
Lewisham College	3,072
Southwark College	1,963
Tower Hamlets College	1,175
South Thames College	2,378
Westminster College	2,699
City of Westminster College	2,371
Barking College of Technology	2,390
Barnet College	2,817
Hendon College of Further Education	2,064
Erith College of Technology	2,073
Kilburn College of Further Education	1,430
Willesden College of Technology	2,042
Bromley College of Technology	1,395
Orpington College of Further Education	1,126
Croydon College	4,720
Acton Technical College	1,387
Southall College of Technology	1,428
Norwood Hall Institute of Horticultural Education	69
Southgate College	2,275
Enfield College	2,112
Capel Manor Institute of Horticultural and Environmental Control	148
College of North East London	2,701
Elm Park Tertiary College	1,698
Green Hill Tertiary College	2,127
Weald Tertiary College	2,025
Havering Technical College	3,196
Uxbridge Technical College	1,746
Hounslow Borough College	2,166
Kingston College of Further Education	2,723
Merton College	1,357
Wimbledon School of Art	489
Newham Community College	4,580
Redbridge Technical College	1,303
Richmond Upon Thames College	3,246
Carshalton College of Further Education	1,267
Waltham Forest College	3,157
Bournville College of Further Education	1,620
Brooklyn College	1,254
Hall Green College	2,075
East Birmingham College	1,559
Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and C. S.	2,070
Matthew Boulton College	2,858
Handsworth College	1,745
Sutton Coldfield College of Further Education	2,905
Coventry Technical College	2,302
Henley College	1,644
Tile Hill College of Further Education	1,860
Dudley College of Technology	4,335
Halesowen College	2,313
Stourbridge College of Technology and Art	1,846
Sandwell College of Further and Higher Education	5,743
Solihull College of Technology	3,491
Walsall College of Technology	2,594
Walsall College of Art	418
Wulfrun College of Further Education	1,822
Bilston Community College	2,253
Knowsley Community College	2,395
Millbrook College	2,535
South Mersey College	1,871
Sandown College	2,171
City College of Further Education	2,242
The St. Helens College	4,355
Hugh Baird College of Technology	2,269
Southport College of Art and Technology	2,594
Wirral Metropolitan College	5,859
Bolton Metropolitan College	3,066
Bury Metropolitan College	2,866
Manchester College of Art and Technology	5,539
South Manchester College	3,390
Oldham College of Technology	2,185
Hopwood Hall Tertiary College	3,444
Salford College of Further Education	4,477
Stockport College of Technology	4,059
Tameside College of Technology	3,630
South Trafford College of Further Education	1,998
North Trafford College	2,048
Wigan College of Technology	4,002
Leigh College	2,303
Barnsley College	3,683
Doncaster College	5,727
Rotherham College of Arts and Technology	2,450
Rother Valley College of Further Education	1,401
Rockingham College of Further Education	836
Castle Tertiary College	1,846
Stradbroke Tertiary College	1,659
Parkwood Tertiary College	2,000
Loxley Tertiary College	1,933
Norton Tertiary College	2,416
Parson Cross Tertiary College	1,542
Keighley College	1,120

	Number
Brafford and Ilkely Community College	6,969
Shipley College	988
Calderdale College	2,640
Dewsbury College	2,568
Huddersfield Technical College	4,348
Kitson College of Technology	1,735
Park Lane College	3,253
Leeds College of Building	1,264
Airedale and Wharfedale College	1,386
Thomas Danby College	1,503
City of Leeds College of Music	477
Joseph Priestley Institute of Further Education	811
Jacob Kramer College	693
Northern School of Contemporary Dance	71
Wakefield District College	4,099
Gateshead Technical College	2,050
Newcastle College	4,563
North Tyneside College of Further Education	2,915
South Tyneside College	4,083
Monkwearmouth College of Further Education	2,602
Wearside College of Further Education	2,330
Nursery Nurses College of Further Education	392
South Bristol Technical College	2,041
Brunel College of Technology	3,167
City of Bath College of Further Education	2,660
Filton Technical College	2,330
Soundell Technical College of Further Education	1,456
Weston-Super-Mare College of Further Education	2,229
Norton Radstock College of Further Education	744
Bedford College of Higher Education	3,287
Dunstable College	1,611
The Barnfield College	2,039
Reading College of Technology	2,919
Newbury College	1,879
Windsor and Maidenhead College	2,400
Bracknell College	2,102
Langley College of Further Education	1,932
Berkshire College of Art and Design	644
Berkshire College of Agriculture	337
Aylesbury College	1,682
Amersham College of Further Education, Art and Design	2,314
Milton Keynes College	1,801
Cambridge College of Further Education	2,769
Isle College	1,209
The Huntingdonshire College	1,178
Peterborough Regional College	2,828
Cambridgeshire College of Agriculture and Horticulture	163
North Cheshire College	2,942
West Cheshire College of Further Education	3,032
South Cheshire College of Further Education	2,360
Mid-Cheshire College of Further Education	1,829
Macclesfield College Further Education	1,455
Halton College of Further Education	2,255
Cheshire College of Agriculture	606
Hartlepool College of Further Education	1,436
Kirby College of Further Education	1,766
Longlands College of Further Education	1,488
Cleveland Technical College	1,114
Stockton-Billingham Technical College	1,605
Cleveland College of Art and Design	809
Guisborough Agricultural Centre	111
Cornwall College of Further and Higher Education	3,191
Mid-Cornwall College of Further Education	2,025
Penwith Sixth Form College	706
Kendal College of Further Education	565
West Cumbria College	1,456
Barrow-in-Furness College of Further Education	1,436
Carlisle Technical College	1,588
Cumbria College of Art and Design	472
Cumbria College of Agriculture and Forestry	329
Chesterfield College of Technology and Arts	2,859
North East Derbyshire College of Further Education	1,589
South East Derbyshire College	2,301
High Peak College of Further Education	1,406
Wilmorton Tertiary College	2,967
Mackworth Tertiary College	2,076

	Number
Derbyshire College of Agriculture and Horticulture	217
Exeter College	3,549
North Devon College	2,212
East Devon College of Further Education	1,062
South Devon College of Art and Technology	3,411
Plymouth College of Further Education	3,324
Plymouth College of Art and Design	490
Bicton College of Agriculture	633
Bournemouth and Poole College of Further Education	4,099
Weymouth College	2,069
Bournemouth and Poole College of Art and Design	992
Dorset College of Agriculture and Horticulture	318
Darlington College of Technology	2,132
Bishop Auckland Technical College	745
Derwentside College	1,089
New College, Durham	3,221
Peterlee College	1,155
Durham College of Agriculture and Horticulture	237
Brighton College of Technology	3,185
Lewes College	1,377
Hastings College of Arts and Technology	2,185
Eastbourne College of Arts and Technology	2,039
Plumpton College	364
South East Essex College of Technology	2,712
Braintree College of Further Education	964
Colchester Institute	3,587
Thurrock Technical College	2,051
Harlow College	2,891
Loughto College of Further Education	2,531
Basildon College of Further Education	1,217
Chelmsford College of Further Education	2,184
Writtle Agricultural College	554
Gloucestershire College of Arts and Technology	4,793
Royal Forest of Dean College	1,167
Stroud College of Further Education	1,854
Hartpury College	142
Basingstoke Technical College	2,050
Farnborough College of Technology	2,961
Brockenhurst College	1,348
Alton College	1,117
Eastleigh College of Further Education	1,887
The Tertiary College, Fareham	2,067
Cricklade College	1,260
South Downs College of Further Education	2,105
Southampton Technical College	2,622
Highbury College of Technology	3,214
Portsmouth College of Art, Design and Further Education	553
Sparsholt College	1,198
Evesham College of Further Education	782
Herefordshire Technical College	2,028
Kidderminster College of Further Education	1,354
Worcester Technical College	2,891
North East Worcestershire College	2,924
Herefordshire College of Art and Design	372
Pershore College of Horticulture	371
Herefordshire College of Agriculture	138
Worcestershire College of Agriculture	121
Ware College	1,653
North Hertfordshire College	2,656
Cassio College	2,240
Watford College	2,253
de Havilland College	2,278
East Hertfordshire College	1,315
Stevenage College	1,771
Dacorum College	707
City College, St. Albans	3,191
Hertfordshire College Art and Design	465
Hertfordshire College of Agriculture and Horticulture	295
Hull College of Further Education	5,398
Grimsby College of Technology and Arts	2,932
Beverley College of Further Education	793
East Yorkshire College of Further Education	1,315
North Lindsey College of Technology	2,204
Bishop Burton College of Agriculture	938
Isle of Wight College of Art and Technology	2,059
North-West Kent College of Technology	1,409
Mid Kent College of Higher and Further Education	3,557

	Number
West Kent College of Further Education	3,413
Thanet Technical College	1,933
Kent College Careers Service	77
South Kent College of Technology	2,632
Canterbury College of Technology	2,327
Hadlow College of Agriculture and Horticulture	388
Accrington and Rossendale College	3,646
Burnley College of Art and Technology	2,254
Blackburn College	5,199
Lancaster and Morecambe College of Further Education	2,125
Nelson and Colne College	2,095
Blackpool and Fylde College of Higher and Further Education	6,445
W. R. Tuson College	4,971
Runshaw College	2,425
Skelmersdale College	2,053
Lancashire College of Agriculture and Horticulture	715
Coalville Technical College	985
Hinckley College of Further Education	863
Loughborough College	1,985
Melton Mowbray College of Further Education	885
Wigston College of Further Education	766
Charles Keene College of Further Education	2,289
South Fields College of Further Education	2,147
Brooksby Agricultural College	343
Grantham College of Further Education	1,211
Stamford College	983
Boston College	1,406
North Lincolnshire College	2,852
Lincolnshire College of Art and Design	637
Lincolnshire College of Agriculture and Horticulture	595
Norfolk College of Art and Technology	2,890
Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education	4,662
Great Yarmouth College of Further Education	1,260
Norfolk Institute of Art and Design	662
Norfolk College of Agriculture and Horticulture	233
Scarborough Technical College	1,928
York College of Art and Technology	3,516
Harrogate College of Art and Technology	1,794
Craven College	768
Selby College	1,085
Askham Bryan College of Agriculture and Horticulture	699
Bedale Agriculture Centre	138
Pickering Agriculture Centre	105
Easingwood Agriculture Centre	58
Harrogate Agriculture Centre	76
Tresham College	2,629
The Wellingborough College	959
Northampton College	2,178
Daventry Tertiary College	646
Moulton College	207
Northumberland College of Art and Technology	2,086
Northumberland College of Agriculture	65
Broxtowe College of Further Education	2,089
Clarendon College of Further Education	2,851
West Nottinghamshire College of Further Education	2,462
Newark Technical College	1,305
North Nottinghamshire College of Further Education	1,877
People's College of Further Education	1,947
Arnold and Carlton College of Further Education	1,792
Basford Hall College of Further Education	2,681
South Nottinghamshire College of Further Education	2,056
Brackenhurst College	299
North Oxfordshire Technical College and School of Art	1,259
The Henley College	1,726
Rycotewood College	291
West Oxfordshire Technical College	1,090
Oxford College of Further Education	3,243
Abingdon College of Further Education	1,202
Telford College of Arts and Technology	1,872
Oswestry College	1,340
Shrewsbury College of Art and Technology	2,469
Bridgnorth and South Shropshire College of Further Education	691
Walford College of Agriculture	242
Bridgwater College	1,722
Frome College	279
Somerset College of Art and Technology	2,902
Yeovil College	2,534
Strode College	1,183
Somerset College of Agriculture and Horticulture	511
Stoke-on-Trent Cauldon College of Further and Higher Education	3,359
Stoke-on-Trent Technical College	1,188
Burton on Trent Technical College	2,442
Cannock Chase Technical College	1,331
Leek College of Further Education and School of Art	727
Newcastle under Lyme College	1,866
Stafford College	3,160
Tamworth College	1,174
Staffordshire College of Agriculture	402
West Suffolk College of Further Education	1,824
Lowestoft College	2,300
Suffolk College of Higher and Further Education	4,657
Otley College of Agriculture and Horticulture	388
North East Surrey College of Technolgy	3,130
Guildford County College of Technology	3,186
East Surrey College	1,850
Brooklands Technical College	2,375
Epsom School of Art and Design	567
Merrist Wood Agriculture College	421
Mid-Warwickshire College of Further Education	2,829
North Warwickshire College of Technology and Art	2,645
South Warwickshire College of Further Education	1,144
East Warwickshire College of Further Education	1,530
Warwickshire College of Agriculture	435
Crawley College of Technology	2,322
Northbrook College of Design and Technology	2,749
Chichester College of Technology	2,504
West Sussex College of Agriculture and Horticulture	405
Chippenham Technical College	1,541
Salisbury College of Technology	1,972
Swindon College	4,444
Trowbridge Technical College	1,951
The New College, Swindon	1,070
Salisbury College of Art	351
Lackham College of Art	354
TOTAL FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES	718,739

DEFENCE

Navigational Markers

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those fairways, harbours and creeks in the United Kingdom which the Royal Navy administers or provides navigational markers where there is no Royal Naval presence or regular naval activity; and if he will set out the policy reasons for retaining these.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are four such areas other than those which lie within dockyard ports: the Thames estuary, Benbecula, St Kilda and Cope channel. Markers are maintained in these areas to indicate safe navigation or to mark hazards such as wrecks.

Solent (Navy Administration)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out those creeks and harbours outside of Portsmouth harbour for which Her Majesty's harbour master has administrative responsibility in the Solent; and if he will set out the policy reasons for the Royal Navy's administration of each of them.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are three creeks and harbours in this category: Hillhead harbour, Ryde

Harbour and Wootton creek. We are considering whether it remains appropriate for the Queen's harbour master to exercise waterspace management and administration in these areas.

Dredging

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those areas where the Royal Navy or Ministry of Defence procures dredging.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The three main geographical areas where the Royal Navy procures dredging are as follows:

Scotland
Rosyth
RNAD Crombie
Invergordon
Greenock
Faslane
RNAD Coulport

Portsmouth
Main harbour
HMS Nelson (Gunwharf)
HMS Dolphin
Gosport oil fuel depot
RNAD
Royal Clarence yard
Harbour mooring areas
Entrance channel

Devonport
Royal William yard basin
Shallow dock entrance
Ernesettle jetty
Main approach channel

Submarines (The Minches)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number and duration of submarine exercises in the Minches since 1985.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost and effort.

Military Bridging System

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the origins, purpose and state of progress of the bridging for the 1990s military bridging system; which elements of the system will be *(a)* wheeled or *(b)* tracked; which equipment it is proposed to replace; how much has been (i) spent and (ii) committed to date; which units, based in which country, will receive the proposed equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: "Bridging for the 90s" (BR90) is needed to replace in-service bridging as it comes to the end of its planned life. The purpose of BR90 is to enhance the mobility of armoured formations. The system will enable longer bridges to be built faster with less manpower.

BR90 is a modular system. Most of its elements can be launched and recovered by bridge-laying and by wheeled bridge-laying vehicles. Some 60 per cent. of the bridges are intended to be tank launched. The tank launched bridges have completed contractor trials and are now undergoing user trials with a British Army unit. The truck launched system has commenced contractor trials.

BR90 will replace the No 8 and 9 tank bridges and Crusader tank bridge transporters. Some medium girder bridges will also be replaced.

Payments to date total £26·4 million, and a further £7·9 million is committed to the completion of the development phase. We have recently committed £15·3 million to preparation for production.

The BR90 system will be deployed with Royal Engineer units in both Germany and United Kingdom.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his current estimate of the number of European fighter aircraft which will be required by the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Aitken: The current planning assumption is that the RAF will require 250 European fighter aircraft. Final EFA numbers are, however, still subject to study.

Anti-air Warfare Radar

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to place an order for an anti-air warfare in-board radar simulator.

Mr. Aitken: Current plans are to place a contract at the end of 1992.

Air Defence System

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to place an order for a very short range air defence system for surface ships.

Mr. Aitken: My Department is currently considering a proposal for a collaborative feasibility study with Italy to provide an affordable autonomous ship-borne weapon system for very short range air defence. This would provide protection against future anti-surface ship missiles and would enter service early in the next decade. Subject to satisfactory progress in negotiations, we hope to place a contract for the study early next year, following a competition.

Attack Helicopters

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the programme for the procurement of the attack helicopter.

Mr. Aitken: Later this year we intend to issue to industry a request for proposals for the supply of an attack helicopter. Following assessment of the responses we receive, we intend to place a contract through a prime contractor which would allow the chosen aircraft to enter service with the British Army before the end of the decade.

Local Area Missile System

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if it is the intention of the United Kingdom to withdraw from the multinational programme for the development of the next generation local area missile system.

Mr. Aitken: No Sir.

HMS Turbulent

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the report of the investigation of the fire aboard HMS Turbulent.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) on 2 June, *Official Report*, column *540*.

Menwith Hill

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what part of the United States military operates from Menwith hill, north Yorkshire.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Personnel from all four United States armed services are employed at Menwith hill.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are employed at Menwith hill, north Yorkshire by *(a)* the National Security Agency and *(b)* the British Government.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Currently some 1,200 United States department of defence personnel and 560 United Kingdom nationals are employed at Menwith hill.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the past, present and future role of the base at Menwith hill, north Yorkshire;

(2) what is the purpose of the underground operations at Menwith hill, north Yorkshire.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United States communications facility at Menwith hill is located on a Ministry of Defence site made available to the United States department of defence. It is an integral part of the world wide department of defence communications network but I am not prepared to comment further on its operational role. It operates with the full knowledge and consent of Her Majesty's Government.

Vigilante Forces

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to prevent former British service men from providing military expertise and support for extreme right vigilante forces in South Africa and other countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Officers may require prior approval from the Ministry of Defence before taking up certain business appointments within two years of leaving the armed forces, but it would be impractical, and an undue restriction on the freedom of individuals, to impose wider restrictions on the employment taken up by former service personnel.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Malawi

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what extra provisions Her Majesty's Government have made for drought relief in Malawi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Most recently we have allocated £4 million for drought-related activities in Malawi, these funds being derived from those parts of the regular aid which were suspended last month because of Malawi's human rights record. We are considering urgently with the relevant relief agencies and the Malawi authorities how best these funds might be used. This latest allocation is in addition to the 5,000 tonnes of cereals provided earlier this year for Mozambican refugees in Malawi; and the £1 million contribution to the World Food Programme's targeted feeding programme for vulnerable groups among Malawi's own population.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement outlining Her Majesty's Government's current policy on bilateral aid to Malawi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 20 May, at column *166*.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide details of measures being taken by Her Majesty's Government to monitor the distribution of humanitarian aid in Malawi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In accordance with our normal practice, primary responsibility for monitoring humanitarian aid provided by Her Majesty's Government will rest with those international organisations and non-governmental organisations through which the aid is channelled. Reports on the utilisation of multilateral contributions through the World Food Programme will be made to its governing body, the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes, in due course.

Promotion of Democracy

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will identify the budget authorisation within the current or past expenditure of the European Economic Community concerning the promotion of democracy or democratic systems or institutions; what past and current sums have been or are allocated in ECU at sterling equivalents; where lists of grants made can be obtained; what groups or organisations in the United Kingdom have obtained grants; and for what purposes.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As a result of the November 1991 Development Council resolution on human rights, democracy and development, the promotion of democracy now forms an integral part of the aid relationship between the EC and developing countries. To consolidate Community action in this area two new budget lines were established in 1991; B7-5052 for the promotion of human rights and democracy in developing countries; and B7-5078 for the support of democratisation in Latin America, both with an allocation of 10 million ecu, about £7 million, for 1992. No projects have yet been fully implemented, but we would expect detailed information about lists of grants and recipients to be made available in due course. A 5 million ecu, £3·5 million, project for support of democracy in eastern Europe—B7-6000—has recently been approved under the PHARE programme.

Climate Change

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken by his Department to assist countries to *(a)* assemble stocks of crop plants likely to be more suitable to possible climate changes, *(b)* review irrigation schemes in the light of climate changes and *(c)* develop guidance to farmers and village communities on the likely impact of climate change.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Overseas Development Administration is funding research to predict the influence of increased atmospheric carbon dioxide on the growth and yield of crops such as sorghum and groundnut. Through contributions to centres in the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research, Britain is a major contributor to the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources. Under its renewable natural resources research strategy the ODA supports research into crop physiology and the development of new species which will be better suited to changing environmental conditions, particularly the environmental stresses of drought and salinity.

The ODA also provides support for genetic resources conservation of crop plants and their wild host relatives at international agricultural research centres and is funding research projects in the Sahel and in the middle east.

The ODA is funding two studies on the impact of climate change for the Governments of Ghana and Kenya. This work includes specialist exploration of the potential effects of climate change on agricultural practices, including irrigation. The studies will present policy options for Governments and will address the institutional means by which these could be implemented, including the need for extension programmes to provide guidance to local communities.

Air Pollution

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support is currently given by the Overseas Development Administration to assist with technology transfer for countries seeking regional conventions on the prevention of trans-boundary air pollution.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No such projects, linked specifically to prospective regional conventions, are being supported currently from bilateral aid funds. We do not have available sufficiently detailed information to indicate whether aid made available through multilateral channels is used for the activities specified.

Family Planning

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much money is allocated by his Department towards family planning services; and if he has any plans to increase the allocation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Aid programme spending on direct population activities totalled over £26 million in 1991, which represents a 55 per cent. increase over the last two years. Population is a priority in the aid programme, and we hope to continue to increase our bilateral support to population programmes and reproductive health services in Africa and Asia, to the United Nations Population Fund, and to non-governmental organisations active in this area.

Pollution

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he possesses on the financial commitments advocated by the World bank and the International Monetary Fund to ameliorate environmental degradation and pollution in developing countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The "World Development Report 1992", published by the World bank in May on development and the environment has been placed in the Library of the House. Chapter 9 of the report sets out the World bank's broad estimates of the costs for key sectors of implementing policies and programmes for accelerating environmentally responsible development.

The International Monetary Fund provides resources to enable countries pursuing economic reform to cope with balance of payments problems. It does not produce information on the costs of environmental policy measures.

Local Health Services

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much money is being allocated by his Department towards *(a)* the creation of facilities in villages and urban neighbourhoods using paramedical personnel, *(b)* expanding health outreach support to individual households and *(c)* encouraging health promotion through localised organisations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Overseas Development Administration spent some £61 million in bilateral health sector assistance in 1990, the latest year for which figures are available. This amount includes support to projects, including non-governmental organisations, active in these three areas, but allocations are not broken down in a form that allows us to identify expenditure in this particular way.

Aid Targeting

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of Overseas Development Agency funds are targeted *(a)* through non-governmental organisation projects and *(b)* through the International Monetary Fund and the World bank.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1990-91, the latest statistics available, Overseas Development Administration funds administered through non-governmental organisations represented 5·2 per cent. of the gross aid programme, and the funds channelled through the International Monetary Fund and the World bank 10·2 per cent. of the gross aid programme.

Climate Change

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much is currently allocated by his Department to protect vulnerable low-lying coastal areas from the possible effects of climate changes.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Overseas Development Administration is funding three studies of the impact of climate change, including sea level rise at a total cost of £362,500, three projects on coastal zone management at a cost of £1,850,000 and a research project on the use of artificial reef blocks costing £245,000. The details of these projects are as follows:

Country	Project	Value £	Dates
Kenya	Study on the impacts of climate change	175,000	1991-92
Ghana	Study on the impacts of climate change	175,000	1991-92
Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States	Preliminary study of Sea Level Rise	12,500	1991
Maldives	Support for the development of coastal management and conservation strategies	450,000	1989-94
Indonesia	Coastal zone management and shrimp culture	1,300,000	1990-94
British Virgin Islands	Production of coastal zone atlas	100,000	1992
Maldives	Research into the rehabilitation of degraded reefs using artificial reef blocks	245,000	1989-93

Climate change is one of the key areas for which funding is available for developing countries from the global environment facility—GEF. Britain has committed £40·3 million to the initial funding of the GEF.

Vietnam

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will consider establishing a know-how fund for Vietnam.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have already made provision for a modest technical co-operation programme with Vietnam and have agreed with the Government of Vietnam that the priority for the transfer of know-how under this programme should be the management of economic reform. We are discussing a project that will provide training in this area to four or five key Vietnamese institutions.

Rain Forests

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy of promoting the interests of biodiversity in rain forests.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The ODA publication "Biodiversity and Developing Countries—Issues and Options" explains the priority the ODA gives to promoting biodiversity conservation, including in rain forests. Bilateral aid projects, both on a country to country basis and through British NGOs, are supported. Research is supported through ODA's natural resources programmes including the forestry research programme managed by the Oxford Forestry Institute. The ODA contributes to a variety of multilateral agencies whose programmes also include biodiversity conservation. In addition biodiversity is one of the key areas for which funding to cover certain agreed costs is available for developing countries from the global environment facility. Britain has already committed £40·3 million to the initial financing of the GEF.

Substances Abuse

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held between the Government and representatives of the United Kingdom drinks industry relating to the programme on substance abuse of the World Health Organisation, particularly as it affects alcohol advertising and marketing in third-world countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No such discussions have been held.

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the British financial contribution to the programme on substance abuse of the World Health Organisation in the current financial year; and what are the projected contributions for the next two years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have contributed £200,000 since the programme was established in September 1990. Our financial contribution in the current financial year has not yet been finalised and projections for subsequent years are not available.

Kenya

Mr. Matthew Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response Her Majesty's Government have made to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refuges appeal for assistance to refugees in Kenya; and what aid Her Majesty's Government are providing for drought-stricken areas of Kenya.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: On 5 June my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development announced a pledge of £1 million to the UNHCR appeal. A further £1 million is being given to WFP and CARE to help supply, transport, distribute and monitor food for 500,000 Kenyans in the most seriously affected districts of northern Kenya.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Lobsters

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he is making to the EC about the proposals on lobster sizes.

Mr. Curry: With effect from 1 June 1992 the definition of minimum landing size of lobsters was revised to remove ambiguity in the legal text of the relevant EC Regulation in certain of the languages of the Community. The United

Kingdom industry was consulted about this change last June and informed of the Council's decision in October 1991. However, in response to very recently expressed concerns we are considering the matter urgently.

Shellfish

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the number of *(a)* businesses, *(b)* employees and *(c)* self-employed persons who will be affected by the delay in making arrangements for the carrying out of sampling of shellfish in readiness for the necessity to comply with EEC directive 91/492/EEC and 91/493/EEC.

Mr. Curry: I expect to publish a preliminary classification this summer for comment, and to have the classification in operation from 1 January 1993 as required.

Habitats

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to introduce new legislation as a result of the provisions relating to the marine environment in the EC habitats directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: We are still at an early stage in considering the implementation of the EC Habitats Directive, which was adopted on 21 May. We shall announce proposals in due course.

Seismic Surveys

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set out the compensation requirements for oil companies to pay *(a)* fishermen for (i) fixed gear and (ii) lobster pots and *(b)* net and line fishermen for damage to gear and for suspension of fishing during seismic surveys.

Mr. Curry: Any payment by oil companies to fishermen whose activities are affected by seismic surveys is entirely a matter for negotiation between the parties concerned.

Mink

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice his Department gives to establishments, licensed under the Mink (Keeping) Order 1987, on the avoidance of spread of diseases of mink between establishments and to other wild species.

Mr. Soames: There are currently 22 establishments licensed under the Mink (Keeping) Order 1987 to keep mink for fur-bearing purposes in England, and over 38,000 individual mink are kept under these arrangements. In the last 12 months there have been no reports of escapes received by the Ministry. No mink farms currently operate in Wales.

Sheep Dip

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the information sought by the Veterinary Products Committee from the manufacturers and distributors of organophosphorous sheep dips includes the results of tests on humans before the products were licensed; whether this data was verified by an independent assessor; and when he expects to publish this information.

Mr. Soames: Section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968 prohibits the disclosure of information received in support of an application for a product licence. However, the Veterinary Products Committee has noted, as part of its current review of sheep dip licences, that certain aspects of the products and conditions of use need further evaluation, including studies of farm operators, including blood tests and details of protective clothing worn as well as studies to show which areas of the bodies of operators are most exposed. The companies concerned have been asked to provide additional data by the end of 1992.

The conclusions of the review will be published once it has been completed.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will suspend the use of organophosphorous sheep dips and the compulsory sheep scab eradication scheme until the Veterinary Products Committee's evaluation of the health side effects on operators is complete.

Mr. Soames: The independent Veterinary Products Committee (VPC) has recently advised that, at present, there is no clear evidence that licensed organophosphorous sheep dips cause any unacceptable level of health risk to humans when used in accordance with the label instructions. On the basis of this advice I do not propose to suspend the licences for these products.

With regard to the compulsory sheep scab eradication scheme I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) on 8 June at col. *12*.

Pesticide Poisoning

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will indicate the number of pesticide poisoning incidents involving birds or animals for the years ended 31 March 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Soames: The number of confirmed incidents in England and Wales involving birds or animals were as follows:

	Number
1989-90	89
1990-91	100
1991-92	[1]111

[1] Subject to some outstanding analyses.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those incidents of poisoning involving vertebrate wildlife in each of the last four years indicating the number of incidents investigated and the number in which pesticides were identified as the likely cause of death.

Mr. Curry: The numbers of incidents in Great Britain involving vertebrate wildlife were as follows:

Year	Vertebrate wildlife incidents investigated	Pesticides identified as likely cause of poisoning
1988	277	72
1989	343	96
1990	373	82
1991	372	72

Further information is published in the annual "Pesticide Poisoning of Animals" report, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Cereals

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the revised intervention prices for cereals for 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 recently decided by the Council of Ministers of £93, £86 and £80, respectively, will apply to feed-quality cereals.

Mr. Curry: The agreement reached by the Council of Ministers on 21 May 1992 included a request to the Commission to submit proposals to the Council on the standard qualities to which prices should apply.

Irradiated Food

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made on the development of detection tests for irradiated food.

Mr. Gummer: My Department's food science laboratory today published a report in the "Food Analysis" series, a methodology for the detection of irradiated herbs and spices, using a technique called thermoluminescence.

The test has been validated internationally and recently was the subject of a successful collaborative trial in European laboratories co-ordinated by the Community bureau of reference (BCR). A summary of the BCR results appears in the report.

Seismic Surveys

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will suspend the licence to Elf to undertake a seismic survey until after the summer fishing and yachting season.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

The licensee, now Elf Enterprise (Caledonia) Ltd, was granted a licence in 1991 to explore for and to produce oil and gas lying under block 98-112. No separate licence or permission is needed by the licensee to carry out the seismic survey. The company carried out consultations prior to beginning the survey, and I understand adjusted its plans as a consequence.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Housing Associations (Grants)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list details of grants and loans made to each unregistered housing association in Northern Ireland by the Housing Executive from 1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992.

Mr. Atkins: The Chairman of the Housing Executive has advised me that there were no loans made to unregistered housing associations between 1 April 1991 and 31 March 1992. However, the following grants were made during this period:

	£
Glenall housing co-operative	7,500
Victoria estates	405

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list details of grants and loans made to each housing association in Northern Ireland by the Housing Executive from 1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992.

Mr. Atkins: I am informed by the Chairman of the Housing Executive that no grants or loans were made to registered housing associations in this period. Government funding of registered housing associations is channelled through the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. The amount of capital funding provided by the Department to each association in this period is as follows:

Housing association	Capital funding £
Abbeyfield	449,240
Ballymacarrett	nil
Ballynafeigh	779,040
Baptist Union of Ireland	301,277
Belfast Community	37,679
Belfast Improved Houses Ltd	2,977,617
Ben Madigan	283,285
Botanic	72,010
Broadway	729,008
James Butcher	3,500,123
Church of Ireland	309,369
Clonard	217,483
Coral Crescent	nil
Connswater	120,461
Covenanter	8,712
Craigavon and District	578,586
Craigowen	28,829
Derry	2,210,788
Donacloney	58,379
Down and Connor	521,375
Dungannon and District	410,202
Flax	779,530
Fold	3,678,886
Gosford	64,596
Grove	52,361
Habinteg	1,366,561
Hearth	194,452
Latharna	438,105
Lisnagarvey	543,000
Malone	8,716
Masonic	309,453
McGarel	497
Newington	78,590
NIH	4,586,502
Northern Ireland Co-ownership	6,442,900
North Belfast Mission	8,356
Open Door	1,131,536
Presbyterian	559,265
Royal British Legion	1,410,188
St. Matthews	1,336
Students	2,033,656
Tennent Street and District	321,878
Triangle	808,867
Ulidia	270,962
Willowfield	31,825
Woodvale and Shankhill	1,563,505

Hotel Inspections

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what inspections of hotels are carried out each year by the Northern Ireland tourist board.

Mr. Atkins: Under the Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, the board carries out an annual statutory inspection of hotels to ensure that premises meet minimum standards and, as necessary, in response to complaints. In addition, under a voluntary scheme annual inspections are carried out to determine the classification and grading of hotels.

Teachers (Retirement)

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) pursuant to his answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, columns *440-41* whether he will publish the guidance issued by the education and library boards and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools relating to the enhancement of pensions of teachers taking early retirement;

(2) whether he will state the number of teachers in controlled schools that each of the education and library boards decided should be permitted to take early retirement and the number of teachers in Catholic maintained schools that the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools decided should be permitted to take early retirement in each of the last three financial years, showing in each case the number that were awarded pension enhancement.

Mr. Hanley: I will arrange for the guidance issued by the education and library boards and the Council for Catholic Schools to be placed in the Library.

For the financial years 1989-90 and 1990-91, the education and library boards and the boards of governors of Catholic maintained schools decided on the number of teachers to be released under the premature retirement scheme in the controlled and Catholic maintained schools respectively; only cases relating to the efficient discharge of the employers' function being subject to Department of Education approval. These same bodies also decided on the level of enhancement.

Under the arrangements introduced in the 1991-92 financial year, decisions on premature retirement, including enhancement, have been taken by the boards of governors of controlled and maintained schools which have fully delegated budgets. In the case of special schools and schools with partially delegated budgets, these decisions have been taken by the education and library boards in respect of the controlled school and by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools in respect of Catholic maintained schools.

The number of premature retirements on grounds of redundancy and of efficient discharge, and the number awarded enhancement in each of the last three financial years, are as follows:

Board	*Controlled*	*Maintained*
1989-90[1]		
Belfast education and library board	25	17
Western education and library board	28	15
North Eastern education and library board	47	33
South Eastern education and library board	30	17
Southern education and library board	35	18
Total	165	100
1990-91		
Belfast education and library board	24	23
Western education and library board	38	25
North Eastern education and library board	[2]52	25
South Eastern education and library board	30	10
Southern education and library board	48	16
Total	192	99
1991-92		
Belfast education and library board	[2]18	23
Western education and library board	[2]28	[2]35
North Eastern education and library board	[2]48	22
South Eastern education and library board	[2]33	11
Southern education and library board	[3]43	36
Total	170	127

[1] All with enhancement.
[2] One without enhancement.
[3] Five without enhancement.

Rural Areas

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, columns *441-42*, if he will state the person or body by whom each member of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Council was first nominated or proposed.

Mr. Hanley: The members of the Rural Development Council for Northern Ireland were nominated by the following bodies:

The Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland nominated Jimmy Armstrong, Pat Jess, John Kelly, Aideen McGinley, Patsy McShane and Malcom Woods.
The Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside nominated Robert Hanna.
The Rural Community Network nominated Mark Conway, John Donaghy, Paul McAllister and John McGrady.
District Councils nominated John Fee, Warren Loane and Malachy McSparran.
The Ulster Farmers' Union nominated Hugh Linehan.
The Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association nominated Wilfred Mitchell.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, columns *441-42*, (1) if he will list the wards and townlands in addition to those mentioned in his answer in which the Inter-Departmental Committee on Rural Development established that pockets of deprivation existed;

(2) if he will state the other criteria in addition to geographic and social isolation, high unemployment, demographic imbalances, declining services and poor facilities that were used to select the most deprived rural areas for the purpose of the rural development initiative and give the definitions of geographic isolation and social isolation employed by the Inter-Departmental Committee on Rural Development;

(3) if he will state *(a)* the precise level of unemployment employed by the Inter-Departmental Committee on Rural Development in selecting the most deprived rural areas for

the purpose of the rural development initiative and *(b)* what demographic imbalances and services and facilities were taken into account.

Mr. Hanley: My reply of 2 June, *Official Report*, columns *441-42*, named five main areas which were identified by the Inter-Departmental Committee on Rural Development (IDCRD) as representing concentrations of the most deprived rural areas of Northern Ireland. The IDCRD also agreed that pockets of deprivation could be isolated in most rural areas on a ward or townland basis but that attempts to be too geographically definitive could be unnecessarily restrictive. Accordingly no list of such wards and townlands has been prepared. Rural community groups from outside the primary target areas are not excluded from applying to the Rural Development Council for advice and assistance.

All the criteria used to select the most deprived rural areas can be subsumed within the list included in the question. Geographical isolation was defined on the basis of the absence of car ownership and the close conformity between areas of above average deprivation and the location of marginal or disadvantaged agricultural land.

The principal measure of unemployment was derived from the 1981 census of population and was defined as the percentage of economically active males not in employment. This was used in combination with other measures of deprivation also taken from the census of population to develop an index of multiple deprivation.

In its wide-ranging consultations with rural interests the IDCRD was advised of the problem of the emigration of young people from rural areas and that the elderly were forming an increasing proportion of rural populations. The IDCRD was made aware of limitations of public transport and of high levels of unfit dwellings in rural areas.

Housing Grants

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 22 May, *Official Report*, column *286*, under what statutory authority the Northern Ireland Housing Executive suspended the statutory scheme for housing grants; and when the scheme will be reinstated.

Mr. Atkins: The chairman of the Housing Executive has advised me that the statutory grants scheme has not been suspended.

It is anticipated that a new renovation grants scheme will be introduced later this year and the executive decided to concentrate its efforts in completing all existing formal detailed applications, to enable processes to be completed before the new scheme comes into operation. In that context, the executive decided not to accept new preliminary applications after 28 February 1992. Applications for special grants and grants dealing with statutory notices such as public health orders continue to be accepted, and from 14 May, the Executive has been prepared again to accept preliminary applications for certain grants relating to the disabled.

TRANSPORT

Shipping Registration

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many Dutch trawlers were registered at British ports, by port, in 1989, 1990, 1991 and the latest available date.

Mr. Norris: Details of registered vessels are not kept by type of vessel. The following table is therefore not limited to trawlers but is in respect of all Dutch vessels on the British fishing vessel register.

Port	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*[1]	*Total*
Aberdeen	—	—	1	—	1
Brixham	—	—	—	1	1
Fleetwood	—	—	2	1	3
Grimsby	—	1	5	2	8
Hull	—	—	1	1	2
Lerwick	—	—	1	—	1
Rochester	—	—	1	—	1

[1] 5 June.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 14 May, *Official Report*, column *189*, if he will list the numbers of *(a)* Spanish and *(b)* Dutch fishing vessels registered as British at each port where such vessels are registered.

Mr. Norris: The information as at 5 June for wholly or mainly Spanish or Dutch-owned vessels is as follows:

Port	*Spanish*	*Dutch*
Aberdeen	7	1
Ayr	1	—
Banff	1	—
Brixham	9	1
Buckie	1	—
Falmouth	6	—
Fleetwood	1	3
Grimsby	—	8
Hull	2	2
Lerwick	—	1
Lowestoft	6	—
Milford Haven	11	—
North Shields	1	—
Penzance	7	—
Plymouth	3	—
Rochester	—	1

Women Passengers (Safety)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidelines are currently provided by his Department to transport planners and providers concerning the provision of public transport which is safer for women passengers.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No such guidelines have been issued. However, the Department co-sponsored the passenger guidance leaflet published by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, "Travel Safely by Public Transport". The Department's working group on violence to road passenger transport staff has recommended, among other things, that bus operators install radios and video cameras in their vehicles to protect employees. These measures also help all passengers to travel more safely.

Vehicle Towing

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what study he has made of the incidence of accidents on motorways arising from the presence of vehicles being towed by others which are not specifically designed for towing; and under what circumstances it is permissible for such vehicles to enter the motorway system.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: In 1990 there were 32 casualty accidents involving a vehicle towing another vehicle on a motorway. This is approximately 0.5 per cent. of motorway accidents and one in 8,000 of all accidents. Information is not collected on whether the towing vehicle was designed for the purpose.

A vehicle being towed in such a manner constitutes a trailer and as such is prohibited from the right hand lane of three or more lane motorways.

Distress Watch

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will set out the policy reasons for BT to provide distress watch arrangements on 2182 kHz but not channel 16;

(2) if he will set out the policy reasons for coastguard stations to maintain a continuous listening watch on channel 16 but not on 2182 kHz.

Mr. Norris: Her Majesty's Coastguard keeps watch on VHF channel 16 because not only is it the designated VHF distress channel, it is also the normal calling channel for VHF traffic. It is essential for the Coastguard to monitor and use this channel for them to carry out their functions of maintaining an effective search and rescue organisation. It would make no sense for the distress watch on channel 16 to be separated from Her Majesty's Coastguard's other functions. VHF is used by most fishing and pleasure craft in United Kingdom waters, few of which have MF transmitters. Most radio distress calls requiring immediate response by the Coastguard are made on channel 16. Since 1978 Her Majesty's Coastguard has put in place 120 remote radio sites linked to its 21 rescue centres which are manned 24 hours a day. This is a more comprehensive VHF cover than is now provided by BT.

The distress watch on 500 kHz and 2182 kHz has continued with BT because it has the necessary sites, equipment and, for morse on 500 kHz, trained operators; it would not be worthwhile duplicating these for Her Majesty's Coastguard, especially given the international plan to end the use of 500 kHz as a distress frequency by 1999.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies he has made of the contribution VHF direct calling could make to a cost reduction in the BT distress watch contract.

Mr. Norris: No such specific studies have been made. Use of VHF digital selective calling (VHF/DSC) would considerably increase the costs of distress watch since much new equipment would be required both at sea and ashore. The cost of this equipment would not be justified by gains in effectiveness.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the sources of his advice for the review on cost savings on the BT distress watch contract.

Mr. Norris: The review into the cost of the provision of the BT distress watch service is an internal one to be undertaken by the Department's marine emergency organisation, of which HM Coastguard forms an integral part.

A595

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give his latest traffic flow figures, including those for heavy goods vehicles, for the A595 road between Grizebeck service station and Broughton in Furness, together with those between Grizebeck service station and Soutergate.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Cumbria county council's transport policies and programme document for 1992-93 published in 1991 shows that on the trunk road between Grizebeck service station and Broughton in Furness the annual average daily traffic is 5,500 with 5 per cent. being heavy goods vehicles. Comparable figures for the local road between Grizebeck service station and Soutergate are 4,600 and 8 per cent.

Clifton Bypass

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will announce the date upon which the A453 (Clifton bypass) public inquiry is to be held.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The draft orders for the A453 Clifton lane improvement are expected to be published next year and it is likely that public inquiries will then follow early in 1994.

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the terms of reference for the A453 (Clifton bypass) inquiry will include *(a)* the need for a bypass around the Clifton estate, as opposed to through it, and *(b)* the wider traffic implications for the Nottingham transport infrastructure.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The public inquiries will consider objections made to draft orders published under the Highways Act 1980 together with suggested alternative routes, and will be held by an independent inspector appointed on the nomination of the Lord Chancellor. The inspector, who is responsible for the conduct of the inquiries, will wish to hear all relevant evidence before preparing his report and recommendations for submission to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport.

M3 Extension

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the letting of the main contract for construction of the M3 extension: what will be the process whereby tenders are invited; whether he intends to await the outcome of European Commission legal proceedings relating to the environmental impact assessment directive before inviting tenders for the construction contract; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Preparations for the implementation of this important scheme are proceeding. Tenders have been invited for the main works and are due for return towards the end of August. In accordance with usual practice, an announcement will be made when a contract is let.

Traffic, Greenwich

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the number of traffic accidents, identifying separately accidents to pedestrians and accidents resulting in fatalities, occurring in the Greenwich town centre area in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Norris: The table shows the number of road traffic accidents involving personal injury in the Greenwich town centre area notified to the Department, and a breakdown of the resulting casualties. Data are shown for the years 1982 to 1990. Data for 1991 are not yet available.

Injury accidents, and casualties by road user type and severity: Greenwich town centre[1]: 1982 to 1990.

Number

Year	*Injury accidents*	*Casualties*			
		Vehicle users		*Pedestrians*	
		killed	*injured*	*killed*	*injured*
1982	21	—	19	—	5
1983	17	1	14	—	7
1984	20	—	16	—	10
1985	18	—	16	—	5
1986	17	—	15	—	7
1987	15	—	6	—	10
1988	25	—	16	—	10
1989	28	—	23	—	9
1990	25	—	18	—	8

[1] The one-way system where Creek road, Romney road and Greenwich high road meet, together with the adjacent section of Greenwich high road.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the volume of traffic, broken down between different categories of vehicles, passing through Greenwich town centre in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Norris: The latest estimates are as follows:

Estimated daily vehicle flows through Greenwich town centre[1]: 1990

	Number
Pedal cycles	550
Motorcycles	1,300
Cars and taxis	26,000
Buses and coaches	940
Light goods	3,500
Heavy goods	3,900
Total	36,000

[1] Flow through the one-way system from High road, Creek road and Romney road.

The Department's surveys do not permit annual changes in traffic volume to be estimated for small areas.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information is available to his Department on the average speed of vehicles passing through the Greenwich town centre area at different times of the day, on weekdays and at weekends.

Mr. Norris: The latest available estimates are as follows:

Average vehicle speeds, Greenwich town centre[1]: Weekdays

	1988 (mph)
Morning peak	11·3
Day-time off-peak	11·5
Evening peak	10·6

[1] The main one-way system and adjacent sections of High road, Creek road and Romney road.

No information is available for weekends.

Trans-Pennine Motorways

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in connection with consideration of additional trans-Pennine motorway crossings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I hope to be in a position to be able to make a statement shortly about the findings and recommendations of the consultant's report on trans-Pennine road crossings.

A19

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department intends to install emergency phones along the length of the A19 through the constituency of Easington.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There are no proposals to install emergency telephones on the A19 trunk road at present.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department intends to install roadway lighting alongside the section of the A19 which runs through Peterlee.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There are no plans at present to light the section of the A19 at Peterlee.

Train Doors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the Health and Safety Executive will take action against the current and past chairmen and executive directors of British Rail in respect of causing the deaths of passengers by their neglect in respect of design and maintenance of carriage doors.

Mr. Freeman: The Health and Safety Executive has not yet completed its full report. I expect the Health and Safety Commission to submit the report to the Secretary of State with its advice later in the summer. It is for the executive to consider what further action may be appropriate.

Heathrow Airport

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the projected route of the new motorway spur road that would link the M25 to the proposed fifth terminal at Heathrow airport.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The possible route of the spur road depends on enhancement of the M25 in this sector. We expect to show the Department's proposals for this to the public shortly. It will then be for British Airports Authority to come forward with proposals for the spur road.

Aquatic Environment

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the responsibilities and duties of his Department and any agency which reports to his Department in relation to inshore waters, intertidal areas and maritime land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to the Government's memorandum on this subject which was submitted to the Environment Committee of this House in the last session. It has now been published by HMSO as part of the Environment Committee's report on Coastal Zone Protection and Planning, Volume II, Minutes of Evidence and Appendices.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning the privacy implications arising from the commercial use of personal data held by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency and obtained via statute, and the disclosure to police computers of digitised photographs on the driving licence.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Consideration is being given to the eventual use of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's database for commercial purposes. The concerns of individuals receiving third party mail have been recognised. Any decision will take these and the requirements of the Data Protection Act into account.

The police have access to the driver licensing records for law enforcement purposes under the terms of the Road Traffic Act 1988. This removes any data protection restriction on such statutory disclosure. Photographs of drivers will eventually form part of those records and the Data Protection Registrar will be consulted on the implications.

Fuel Efficiency

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the introduction of a mandatory minimum fuel efficiency standard for vehicles.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on 3 June at column *522*.

Bicycles

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice he gives to local authorities regarding the provision of secure parking places for cycles.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Advice on providing secure, safe and convenient cycle parking is contained in Chapter 6 of the Department's Local Transport Note 1/89 (HMSO), "Making Way for Cyclists". This is one in our series of local transport note publications which offer local authorities detailed guidance on providing for cyclists.

Channel Tunnel

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to alter the route of the channel tunnel rail link as announced by his predecessor last October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: No. The Government remain committed to their preferred route corridor announced last October, approaching London from the east along the lines proposed by Ove Arup, with a terminus at King's Cross. We have no intention of reconsidering other options rejected at that time. We have asked British Rail to define a route along our preferred corridor and expect firm proposals from them by the end of the year. Once we have considered the British Rail proposals, we will announce a detailed route for public consultation, and a full environmental impact assessment will be undertaken.

Railway Electrification

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning current progress of the Leeds/Bradford electrification scheme.

Mr. Freeman: The Government have given the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority credit approvals for the infrastructure. The Government has exceptionally agreed that the West Yorkshire passenger transport executive should acquire the rolling stock by means of an operating lease.

Rail Services

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those services which British Rail may contract out to the private sector under existing legislation, the services which have been so contracted and the services which cannot be contracted out pending amendment to existing legislation.

Mr. Freeman: Under existing legislation, British Rail may contract out to the private sector any of its support services provided that, in so doing, it acts in a financially prudent manner and discharges adequately its statutory duties. BR has already made significant progress in contracting out of such activities, including: all manufacture and some heavy repair of locomotives and rolling stock; all train catering on Network SouthEast and regional railways; Red Star's road collection and delivery service for parcels; design and supply of signalling systems; track weedkilling and reballasting services; train cleaning and station maintenance; and station car park management. BR does not consider that it is empowered to contract out passenger train and track signalling operations under existing legislation, but I have asked BR to consider what further non-core activities might be contracted out.

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent he expects officials of British Rail to consult local authorities about the provision of rail services.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail regularly consults the transport users' consultative committees and, for the London area, the London regional passengers' committee which are the statutory bodies for representing consumer interests.

Where services are supported by a passenger transport executive the level of service is specified by the constituent local authorities of the passenger transport authority. Elsewhere, the extent of consultation between BR and local authorities is for them to agree. However, I understand that BR consults a wide range of interested parties, including local authorities.

Company Cars

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the aggregate level of subsidy to company car owners for each year since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* The benefit of the private use of a company car is taxed by reference to fixed scale charges. But the value of private use to any particular employee depends on a wide range of factors. Information about these is not available, so it is not possible to provide an estimate of the aggregate extent to which company car owners may be subsidised through the tax treatment of the benefit of a company car.

Railway Costs

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the percentage to total railway costs, including capital costs, which is financed from *(a)* revenue and *(b)* investment for each of the EC member states, Sweden, Norway and Finland for each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* I regret that the information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the level of Government financial support given to the railways expressed *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* as a percentage of gross domestic product for each of the EC member states, Sweden, Norway and Finland for each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* I regret that the information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the level of capital expenditure per train kilometre which is spent on railways in each of the EC member states, Sweden, Norway and Finland, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* I regret that the information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Company Cars

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the level of subsidy provided per mile to *(a)* company car owners and *(b)* rail passengers for each year since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* It is not possible to give an estimate of the subsidy per passenger mile to company car owners.

For rail passengers, the following is the information on subsidy per passenger mile requested:

Grants paid to British Rail 1979—1991-92

£ million at 1991-92 prices

Year	*PSO Grant*	*Level Crossing Grant*	*PTE Grant*	*Total*	*Estimated Passenger Miles (Million)*	*Subsidy/PM at 1991-92 prices (Pence)*
1979	1,101·0	31·8	126·4	1,259·2	19·1	7
1980	1,111·4	32·0	131·4	1,274·8	18·8	7
1981	1,328·1	32·8	120·4	1,481·3	18·5	8
1982	1,336·2	32·8	125·2	1,494·2	[2]16·9	9
1983	1,337·0	32·4	130·1	1,499·5	18·3	8
1984-85[1]	1,590·4	36·0	157·1	1,783·5	22·6	8
1985-86	1,161·4	29·2	110·8	1,301·4	18·8	7
1986-87	944·8	27·5	101·3	1,073·6	19·2	6
1987-88	989·2	30·0	102·8	1,122·0	20·6	5
1988-89	647·9	27·9	93·8	769·6	21·3	4
1989-90	568·2	29·8	106·0	704·0	20·9	3
1990-91	642·0	30·9	107·2	780·1	20·6	4
1991-92	900·0	29·2	—	929·2	19·9	5

[1]15 months ended March 1985.
[2]Passenger miles affected by strikes.

WALES

Income Support

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female pensioners were dependent on income support in Wales in each year since 1988.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Estimates of those aged 60 years and over and either in receipt of income support or partners of recipients are given in the following table:

Thousands

Claimants and partners	*In receipt of weekly payment on 31 May* [1]*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
(a) Male	N/a	24	29
(b) Female	N/a	79	81
TOTAL	112	103	110

[1] in 1988 there were 28,000 male and 71,000 female claimants of income support in Wales. Separate figures for male and female partners are not available.

Source:
Income Support Annual Statistical Enquiries, 1988, 1989, 1990.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what appointments he has made of chairmen for the training and enterprise councils in Wales; what indication he has given of the length of time to be served by these chairmen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I set eligibility criteria for chairmen of training and enterprise councils, but I do not appoint them. The chairmen are elected by their respective boards for periods which they determine.

Treatment Centres

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, for *(a)* the treatment centre for ophthalmology at Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor, *(b)* the treatment centre for ophthalmology at Bridgend general hospital, *(c)* the treatment centre for hernias and varicose veins at Bridgend general hospital and *(d)* the treatment centre for major joint surgery at the Prince of Wales hospital, Rhydlafar, Cardiff, (i) the number of operations contracted by the Welsh Office for the current financial year, (ii) the percentage of (i) that will come from outside the health authority in which the treatment centre is located, (iii) the numbers coming from each health authority where the patients have their residence, separately distinguishing referrals from general practitioners and consultants and (iv) the number of patients who have been referred to date to each centre.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The numbers of operations to be contracted by the Welsh Office in the current financial year are as follows:

Surgical treatment centre Bridgend general hospital—1,000 hernias and varicose veins.

Orthopaedic treatment centre Rhydlafar hospital—255 hip and knee joint replacements and other orthopaedic operations

Ophthalmic treatment centre Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor —300 cataracts

Ophthalmic treatment centre Bridgend general hospital —850 cataracts

Activity levels and associated funding at the Bangor treatment centre will be reviewed in November.

The allocation of centrally funded capacity between district health authorities is currently being finalised, based on bids received from the authorities and their waiting list problems. I will write to the hon. Gentleman shortly and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House. The centres are free to negotiate additional contracts with district health authorities should any spare capacity remain.

Comprehensive data on specific sources of referral is not currently available.

The total number of patients treated at each treatment centre from their different start dates to 31 March 1992 is as follows:

Surgical treatment centre
Bridgend general—opened April 1990—1,980 (procedures)
Ophthalmic treatment centre
Bridgend general—opened October 1991—419
Orthopaedic treatment centre
Rhydlafar hospital—opened December 1989—647
Ophthalmic treatment centre
Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor—opened July 1990—692

Local Plans

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what action he is intending to take against local authorities which have no local plan in place;

(2) if he will publish those local authorities in Wales which have not yet produced local plans.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The White Paper, "This Common Inheritance", reaffirmed the Government's belief in an effective development plan system and set out proposals for its improvement.

Section 36 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) makes preparation of statutory local plans for all areas mandatory and, as indicated in Planning Policy Guidance Note 12 'Development Plans and Strategic Planning Guidance in Wales' (February 1992), my right hon. Friend expects local plan coverage in Wales to be substantially complete within five years.

The new arrangements came into operation on 10 February 1992. No authority has yet completed local plan procedures under the new system.

Welsh Language

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make available in Welsh the 1992 DES leaflets, "How is Your Child Doing at School", and "A Parent's Guide to Tests and Reports for 7 and 14 year olds".

Sir Wyn Roberts: Separate bilingual booklets for Wales have already been published by the Welsh Office. Parents can obtain copies through schools or directly from the Welsh Office Education Department. I have arranged for copies to be made available to all Members of Parliament in Wales.

Physiotherapists

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the current numbers of physiotherapists in each health authority in Wales; and what steps are being taken to provide training places to increase those numbers.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The number of physiotherapists employed by health authorities in Wales as at 30 September 1991 was as follows:

	Number	*Whole-time equivalent*
Clwyd	127	94·4
East Dyfed	53	44·0
Gwent	104	85·3
Gwynedd	72	54·1
Mid Glamorgan	102	85·7
Pembrokeshire	24	20·5
Powys	49	29·7
South Glamorgan	198	155·2
West Glamorgan	93	81·2
WALES	822	650·3

Current staffing levels in this and other staff groups in the NHS in Wales are monitored annually under the manpower resource planning exercise which was initiated in 1987. Forecasts are also made of staffing requirements for the next five years. These data are used to inform decisions on funding training activity, etc., within the various professions.

Physiotherapy has been identified as one of four "shortage professions", along with occupational therapy, speech therapy and clinical psychology. Increased training in these professions has been funded through student sponsorships under arrangements which have operated since 1990-91. Over £100,000 has been allocated to train 12 student physiotherapists.

Other initiatives for remedying these shortages are being examined, including possible overseas recruitment. More generally, recruitment and retention considerations also influenced the Government's decision to accept in full the review body's recommendation for an average 6·4 per cent. increase in the pay of professions allied to medicine from 1 April 1992.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to consult regularly with bodies representing physiotherapists to discuss matters affecting their profession.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office enjoys close links with the various professional bodies which represent both physiotherapists and other health care professions. Consultation with these bodies is routinely undertaken as necessary.

County Council Elections

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has taken such steps as are necessary to cancel or delay the county council elections due to be held in Wales in 1993 in the light of his proposed reorganisation of local government in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave on 5 June 1992 at col. *662*.

Recycling

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to introduce a ring-fenced credit approved scheme for local authorities in Wales to encourage investment in waste re-cycling schemes.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: We have no proposals to alter the current formula based arrangements for the distribution of local authority capital resources, which are supported by the local authority associations.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for the acquisition of alternative feeding grounds for wading birds displaced by the Cardiff bay barrage proposal; what progress he has made in negotiations; and when he expects a conclusion on *(a)* taking an option on and *(b)* acquisition of any such land area.

Mr. David Hunt: My officials are continuing constructive discussions with interested parties, including the Countryside Council for Wales and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, about measures to compensate for the loss of the existing feeding grounds in Cardiff bay. However, it would be premature to estimate the timing of any land acquisition at this stage.

Quarrying

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy that the strict control applied to sites of special scientific interest, including ancient woodland, will prevent any destruction by quarrying of Carmel woods in the Gwenlais valley, Dyfed.

Mr. David Hunt: Policy on planning controls over sites of special scientific interest was published most recently in Welsh Office circular 1/92. Any application for planning permission affecting the site mentioned must be determined on its own merits in the light of that policy. However, an application for registration of an old mining permission under schedule 2 to the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 is currently being considered by the Minerals Planning Authority.

Redundancies

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state for Wales the number of redundancies by standard industrial classification for the latest available year.

Mr. David Hunt: The provisional figures for the period 1 May 1991 to 30 April 1992 are as follows:

SIC		*Number*
0:	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	22
1:	Energy and water supply industries	654
2:	Ore/mineral extraction (other than fuels); manufacture of metals, mineral products and chemicals	942
3:	Metal goods, engineering and vehicle industries	3,486
4:	Other manufacturing industries	1,961
5:	Construction	458
6:	Distribution, hotels and catering, repairs	265
7:	Transport and communication	410
8:	Banking, finance, insurance, business services, leasing	183
9:	Other services	1,538
	Total	9,919

Source: Department of Employment.

Housing Associations

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for consultation with the chairman of Tai Cymru to set up an advisory panel with representation from appropriate professional bodies, housing associations and tenant and resident associations to regulate the inflation-related annual increases in the level of service charges by Welsh housing associations.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

Garth Angharad Hospital

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the impact of the closure of Garth Angharad hospital on the whole of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Initially, it is for health authorities to assess the implications of individual closure proposals in the light of prevailing circumstances and to consult on any such proposals.

Gwynedd health authority is currently considering the future of Garth Angharad within the local as well as the all-Wales context.

Training Schemes

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women in employment received employment training in Wales in the last year for which figures are available.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on numbers of people training under employment training (ET) who have employed status is available on a quarterly basis. The latest information available shows that on 29 March 1992, there were 1,367 people with employed status receiving training under ET in Wales. This information is not collected by gender.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the latest available figures showing the average duration of employment training courses for *(a)* women and *(b)* men in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The latest available figures cover the period from July 1990 to June 1991 and show that the average duration of employment training courses in Wales was 29·7 weeks. This information is not collected by gender.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state, by county and for Wales as a whole, the number of people covered by *(a)* employment training, *(b)* the enterprise allowance scheme and *(c)* the youth training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is not available in the exact form requested, as it is not collected on a county basis. Figures are compiled by training and enterprise councils (TECs) area, and those for 29 March 1992 are set out in the following table:

TEC	*(a) In employment training*	*(b) In enterprise training*	*(c) In youth training*
Gwent	1,883	403	2,974
Mid Glamorgan	2,419	430	3,600
North East Wales	769	150	1,417
North West Wales	951	392	2,090
Powys	556	152	620
South Glamorgan	1,111	252	1,787
West Wales	2,761	977	4,055
WALES TOTALS	10,450	2,756	16,543

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Departmental Responsibilities

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what responsibilities his Department has that apply in Scotland; and what responsibilities have been transferred to his Department from the Scottish Office.

Mr. Key: The responsibilities of the Secretary of State for National Heritage that apply in Scotland broadly follow the territorial division of responsibilities which existed before the creation of the Department of National Heritage. Responsibilities of the Secretary of State which extend to Scotland include: sponsorship of the national heritage memorial fund; the work of the advisory committee on historic wreck sites; the Great Britain Sports Council and the international promotion of British sport; British Screen Finance; European co-production fund; Audio Visual Eureka; film certification; the UK Film Commission; the MEDIA programme; the national film and television school; the British Film Institute; the work of the reviewing committee on the export of works of art; broadcasting; the British Library and the performing arts. He liaises closely with the Secretary of State for Scotland on these matters where appropriate.

No responsibilities have been transferred to the Department of National Heritage from the Scottish Office.

National Lottery

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the employment implications of a national lottery, particularly in the Greater Liverpool area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The effect of a national lottery on overall levels of employment is one of the matters which the Government will be considering in the light of the views expressed in response to the White Paper, "A National Lottery, Raising Money for Good Causes", Cm 1861.

Archaeology

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether the effectiveness of the guidance contained in the planning policy guidance note on archaeology and planning—PPG16—which was issued in November 1990 has been reviewed.

Mr. Key: Yes. English Heritage was invited to review the effectiveness of PPG 16 one year after it had been published and commissioned a firm of consultants, Pagoda Projects, to undertake the work. In order to assess the impact of the PPG, consultations were carried out with developers, archaeologists working for or advising planning authorities, archaeologists working for or advising developers and other interested bodies. The report of the review was submitted at the end of January 1992 and a copy has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

I am pleased to report that the consultants' main conclusions are encouraging. They indicate that the advice given in PPG 16 has been adopted by every local planning authority in England, and that the archaeological significance of planning applications is now much more fully considered. The PPG is also starting to produce a more consistent approach to archaeology in the planning process. This, and the greater certainty for developers which results from addressing archaeological issues at an early stage, is beneficial both for developers and for the heritage. In the light of the report's findings we are satisfied that the guidance is proving valuable to all parties who may become involved with archaeology and the planning system.

However, the report indicated some matters which need to be kept under review, including ways of bringing the PPG to the attention of smaller developers. My Department and English Heritage will be following these up with the relevant bodies shortly.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Single Market

Mr. William Powell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the short title of each of the remaining Acts for which European Community member states must take national implementing measures to implement the completion of the single European market, and in each such case the Community member or members which must still take action.

Mr. Needham: Every six months the Commission produces a comprehensive report for the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament on the implementation of White Paper measures for completing the single market. This shows implementation by each member state. The sixth report covering up to 10 December 1991, published in February 1992, is the latest available; a copy is in the Library—document 4527/92 of 19 December 1991; explanatory memorandum 6 March 1992.

BCCI

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 22 May, *Official Report*, column *332*, if his officials have had any further meetings with the liquidators of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International concerning the convening of a creditors meeting.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 13 May, *Official Report*, column *138*, what matters he is considering regarding the Renewable Energy Advisory Group; when he expects to complete his consideration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend and I are considering carefully how the work of the group can be best completed. I will announce our decision on this as soon as possible.

Aquatic Environment

Mr. Tyler: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the responsibilities and duties of his Department and any agency which reports to his Department in relation to inshore waters, intertidal areas and maritime land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the Government's memorandum on this subject which was submitted to the Environment Select Committee of this House in the last session. It has now been published by HMSO as part of the Environment Committee's report on coastal zone protection and planning, volume II, minutes of evidence and appendices.

Following changes in Departmental responsibilities since the memorandum was written, the responsibilities and duties of the Department of Energy now fall to my Department.

Coal

Mr. Gallie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the Government's intentions with respect to European Community moves towards a European reference price for coal and its implications for the coal industry.

Mr. Eggar: The Commission has put forward preliminary ideas on reference prices for coal as a device to restrain excessive levels of subsidies for coal mining in some member states. There is no suggestion that the Commission intend to subsidise Community coal production so that it is all sold at a reference price level. We support the Commission's aim of reducing unjustifiable subsidies.

Mr. Gallie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list current levels of subsidy given to coal producers within European Community member states.

Mr. Eggar: The amount of subsidy for current coal production in 1990 for relevant European Community member states was as follows:

	£ per tonne
Belgium	55·19
France	10·99
Germany	39·23
Spain	18·83
United Kingdom	—

Source: European Commission.

European Community policy is to have subsidies for current production by all member states phased out, and the Government fully support this aim.

Astra Holdings plc

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when his Department's report on Astra Holdings plc will be completed; and when he will publish it.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I cannot say, although the inspectors are well advanced in their inquiries. A decision on publication will be taken when their report has been received and its contents considered. However, it is the normal practice to publish reports on public companies.

Research

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total research budget of the Department of Energy for each of the past five years; and what is his Department's research budget for the next year on the energy potential of *(a)* fossil fuels, *(b)* nuclear fuels and *(c)* renewable sources of energy.

Mr. Eggar: Total research figures for each of the past five years are as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	172·3
1988-89	187·3
1989-90	140·3
1990-91	175·9
1991-92	124·2

—1987-88 and 1988-89 figures are taken from the "Annual Review of Government Funded R&D". These figures relate essentially to

Frascati R&D and take no account of technology transfer expenditure.
—1989-90 and 1990-91 are final outturn and do include technology transfer expenditure.
—1991-92 figure is taken from Main Supply Estimates and also includes technology transfer expenditure.
—The figures do not include energy efficiency research which is now the responsibility of the Department of the Environment.

The 1992-93 research budget for each of the energy technologies is as follows:

	£ million
(a) fossil fuels	7·6
(b) nuclear fuels	84·3
(c) renewables	24·3

Assisted Areas

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if the Government will now undertake a review of the assisted areas map; and if there will be a period of public consultation.

Mr. Sainsbury: The assisted areas map was last drawn in 1984. In consultation with the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales, my right hon. Friend and I have decided to review it. The revised map will in due course have to be cleared with the European Commission and I plan to put proposals to it later in the year.

A consultation paper on the arrangements for the review and the criteria which will be taken into account in considering changes to the map has been prepared. I have placed copies in the Library and copies are also available from my Department and the Scottish and Welsh Offices.

The problems and needs of all areas will be carefully considered in the review. There will be a period of public consultation. Local organisations and other bodies wishing to make representations should send these either to the appropriate DTI regional office for areas in England or to the Scottish or Welsh Offices before the end of September 1992.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the Government will respond to the recommendations made by the Select Committee for Energy in its second report, 1991-92 on the consequences of electricity privatisation.

Mr. Eggar: The Government welcome the Committee's thorough and wide ranging investigation into the consequences of electricity privatisation. A memorandum, setting out the Government's response to the Committee's recommendations, has been placed in the Library of the House. A further memorandum, setting out the response of the Direct General of Electricity Supply, has also been placed in the Library.

Landward Licensing Round

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will announce the results of the fifth landward licensing round.

Mr. Eggar: I have today announced the conditional award of 26 new exploration licences for blocks in England, Wales and Scotland. The licences allow companies to search and drill for petroleum, subject to the requirements of the planning system and the technical approval of my Department.

Details of the awards have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

I am encouraged by the interest shown in onshore petroleum operations which contributes both to our knowledge of our oil and gas reserves and to their development.

This round was notable for the presence of companies new to the onshore petroleum exploration scene. Onshore exploration can offer significant opportunities to the smaller companies to gain experience in the petroleum business as well as contributing to the general development of the industry.

In 13 of the new licences, the licensees are primarily interested in the potential for the exploitation of methane gas which occurs in and around coal seams. I am very encouraged by this continuing interest. This is a relatively new venture in Great Britain. The first licences to explore the potential for coal bed methane were awarded in the fourth round. Although it is early days yet to make any forecasts on the potential for the exploitation of this resource in the United Kingdom, we remain confident that it could represent a valuable addition to our future energy supplies.

Japanese-owned Companies

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 19 May, *Official Report*, column *105*, if he will give such information relating to the number of employees and the location of Japanese-owned companies as is available to him.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* The Department of Trade and Industry's invest in Britain bureau (IBB) has information only on Japanese companies manufacturing in the United Kingdom. Copies of the IBB's list of Japanese manufacturing companies in the United Kingdom has been placed in the Library. This gives information on the location of Japanese manufacturers in the United Kingdom and the employment created at the time of the announcement of the project.

British Standards Institution

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the current legal and financial basis of the British Standards Institution; and what charges he expects to be made in it when the single market is complete.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* The British Standards Institution (BSI) is an independent body, incorporated by royal charter. It is not part of Government and its legal basis is therefore not a matter for the Government.

The Government's financial involvement with BSI is limited to a grant contribution, to the income of BSI Standards. The institution also comprises two other operating divisions, BSI quality assurance and BSI testing, which are run on a purely commercial basis without Government grants.

Generating Plants

Mr. Evennett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many applications have been received and are outstanding for the construction of gas-fired power generating plants.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* Thirteen.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many applications have been received and are outstanding for the construction of non-fossil fuel power generating plants;

(2) if he will make a statement on his Department's policy concerning the approval of new non-fossil fuel generating plants.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* One application is outstanding. Each application for consent is considered on its merits.

DNA Sequencing

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consideration he is giving to the legal position of job and insurance applications, in relation to DNA sequencing; and what consideration he is giving to laws on codes of practice to prevent misuse of information.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* DNA screening should be carried out only with the consent of the individual concerned. The results of these tests are subject to the same degree of confidentiality as apply to other personal health information. Such information should not be provided for purposes other than those for which the individual has given consent. The Government are aware of the concern about the potential impact of information gained via genetic screening and are keeping a close watch on developments in human genetics.

The United Kingdom insurance industry does not intend to seek mass screening for genetic information within the foreseeable future, but when individuals have had a specific genetic test as part of their medical treatment these tests may fall into the same category as other medical tests and will need to be declared on proposal forms. It is only by obtaining relevant information and by careful judgment by the underwriters that risks can be properly assessed and premiums appropriate to the risk charged.

With regard to job applications, employers are free to attach whatever conditions they consider appropriate to an offer of employment, including conditions relating to health or medical capability, provided that they do not discriminate unlawfully, for example on grounds of sex or race. The terms on which employers offer jobs and on which applicants accept them are in general a matter for the parties concerned, and it would be neither desirable nor practicable for the Government to intervene.

Hunterprint

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what printing contracts the company Hunterprint had, or has outstanding, for work associated with privatisations by the Department of Trade and Industry or the Department of Energy since 1979; and if he will give the dates and the privatisation in question for each contract.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 5 June 1992]:* Hunterprint has not been the main contract printers for any privatisations by the Department of Trade and Industry or the former Department of Energy. Comprehensive information on minor printing contracts is not held centrally. However, Hunterprint did print two brochures which were part of the electricity privatisation marketing campaign: one on the offer of shares in the regional electricity companies, issued in August 1990, and the second on the offer of shares in the generating companies, issued in November 1990.

Anti-dumping Measures

Mr. Ashton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of current anti-dumping controls in shoe and other fast fashion industries.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 June 1992]:* It is for the European Commission to assess the effectiveness of anti-dumping measures. In the shoe and fast fashion industries, espadrilles from China are the only goods on which EC anti-dumping remedies are currently in force.

Footwear Industry

Mr. Ashton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will support the EC proposals to apply quotas in value terms on imports of footwear from China from 1 July and demand backing for this from other EC countries.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 June 1992]:* In common with a number of other member states, the Government have pressed the Commission to present a proper economic case in support of their proposal for an EC-wide quota regime. We shall then weigh the evidence, taking into account not only the United Kingdom footwear industry's support for the measure but also the opposition to it from some United Kingdom importers and retailers.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he intends to take to prevent the unfair dumping of shoes from China into the United Kingdom and the European Community.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 June 1992]:* It is for the industry concerned in the United Kingdom or elsewhere in the European Community to make a case to the European Commission about alleged dumping of goods from third countries and for the Commission to investigate it. I am not aware of any recent complaints about dumping of shoes from China.

Defence Industry (Decline)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will be submitting an application for funds from the European Commission programme for areas affected by the decline of the defence industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* Applications for grants have been submitted under the European Community PERIFRA programme, which is intended, among other objectives, to aid regions facing major structural change because of arms industry conversion to civil production.

PERIFRA is one of a number of programmes in the 1992 European Commuity budget for which there is no underlying legal authority for expenditure. We place considerable importance on ensuring that the requirements of budget discipline apply to all Community spending, in order to protect the interests of taxpayers.

The United Kingdom intends to continue its dialogue with the Commission, Council colleagues and the

European Parliament with a view to ensuring that the treaty and budgetary decisions are respected. In the meantime, applications under PERIFRA will proceed.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Personal Files

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his policy on increasing access by individuals to personal files kept on them by Government Departments.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is already extensive access to computer records under the Data Protection Act 1984 and the Government are willing in principle to extend individuals' access to personal information held on them by Departments where it is practicable and in the public interest to do so.

Aquatic Environment

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what responsibilities and duties the Duchy has in relation to inshore waters, intertidal areas and maritime land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Duchy of Lancaster owns areas of foreshore, tidal rivers and beds of creeks within the boundaries of the County Palatine. The Duchy also owns ponds, lakes and rivers which are not tidal.

The Duchy manages and controls its interests in these areas in the same manner as any other landowner and it is Duchy practice to ensure that any statutory duties are observed.

The Duchy has no responsibility for the sea bed on the seaward side of the line of low tide.

Science (Advisory Structure)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his consultations within the scientific community to see whether changes should be made to the advisory structure.

Mr. Waldegrave: Following the establishment of the Office of Science and Technology, I shall be considering the full range of the office's responsibilities as well as the structures needed to discharge them effectively. I am always ready to listen to the views of the scientific community on the advisory structures as on all other relevant matters.

Toxic Shock Syndrome

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what research is currently being carried out into toxic shock syndrome.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Medical Research Council is the main agency through which the Government support medical research in this country. While not at present supporting any research specifically into toxic shock syndrome, the Medical Research Council is supporting some basic research in staphylococcus which may have some relevance to it. The Medical Research Council is always willing to consider soundly based research proposals in competition with other applications. Information is not collected centrally on relevant publicly funded research which may be being carried out by universities, medical schools or health authorities, nor on research by charities.

Public Bodies

Mr. Mills: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what was the cost of funding public bodies in 1979, 1985, 1990 and currently; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the number of public bodies existing in 1979, 1985, 1990 and currently; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: These details are shown in "Public Bodies 1991", published in December 1991. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

SCOTLAND

Sheriff Ewan Stewart

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he will take on the findings of the inquiry into the conduct of Sheriff Ewan Stewart carried out by the Lord President of the Court of Session and the Lord Justice Clerk.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Following initial consideration of the report submitted to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State by the Lord President of the Court of Session and the Lord Justice Clerk, Sheriff Ewan Stewart was invited to comment on its findings. The conclusions of the report and the sheriff's comments which have now been received are being carefully examined and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will announce his decision as soon as possible.

Prescriptions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the prescription of *(a)* evening primrose oil and *(b)* other homeopathic medicines by the national health service.

Mr. Allan Stewart: One evening primrose oil product is licensed by the licensing authority for the treatment of atopic eczema and is prescribable on the NHS for that purpose. No evening primrose oil preparation has satisfied the licensing requirements of safety and efficacy for any other medical condition.

The Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances advises the Health Departments as to the circumstances in which unlicensed products may be regarded as drugs and has considered the unlicensed evening primrose oil products, which are generally regarded as food supplements, but has not been satisfied that they have any therapeutic use. They have therefore been prohibited for prescription on the NHS. Evening primrose oil is not a homeopathic medicine.

The use of homeopathic treatments is a matter for decision by individual doctors. Doctors in contract with the national health service can provide these treatments for their patients in the same way as with allopathic medicines.

Argyll and Clyde Health Board

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the *(a)* name, *(b)* city, town or village of residence and *(c)* occupation of the chairman, vice-chairman and each member of Argyll and Clyde health board.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The latest information known to us is as follows:

Name	*Position*	*Area of Residence*	*Occupation*
Mr. R. R. Reid	Chairman	Rothesay	Farmer
Dr. J. Moffat	Non-executive member (vice chairman)	Greenock	Retired consultant psychiatrist
Mr. N. M. Faccenda	Non-executive member	Connel	Business man
Mrs. M. A. Foggie	Non-executive member	Greenock	Housewife, former solicitor
Mrs. E. S. Lander	Non-executive member	Kilmacolm	Company director
Mrs. J. C. Le Roux	Non-executive member	Dunoon	Housewife
Mr. C. H. Parker	Non-executive member	Kilmacolm	Company managing director
Mr. K. Brewer	Executive member	Paisley	Director of finance
Dr. A. A. Reid	Executive member	Glasgow	Director of public health
Mr. I. C. Smith	Executive member	Barrhead	General manager

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to make appointments to or dismissals from the membership of Argyll and Clyde health board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend expects to make appointments early in 1993 to fill vacancies which will arise on 31 March 1993 in the membership of Argyll and Clyde health board. Appropriate consultation will be carried out before the appointments are made.

Credit Unions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the development of the credit union movement in Scotland.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

Based on the annual returns from credit unions to the Registry of Friendly Societies, there were 57 credit unions in Scotland at the end of 1990 with aggregate assets of £5,051,000, equivalent to nearly 30 per cent. of the total assets of the movement in Great Britain. Those 57 unions together had over 19,000 members, representing 35 per cent. of the total in Great Britain. Currently, there are 70 Scottish unions on the register which represent 20 per cent. of the total number of credit unions in Great Britain.

Woodlands

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about changes affecting the area of ancient semi-natural woodland since 1962.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The Government's broadleaves policy and the changes introduced in 1984 to the criteria for granting felling licences and in 1985 to the volume of timber which may be felled without a licence have done much to slow the decline of ancient semi-natural woodland in Scotland. Further measures to remove the remaining causes of decline are being considered.

The Government have also introduced measures to encourage the management of existing ancient semi-natural woodlands and the creation of new native woodlands. Early indications are that these measures are proving a success.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to double the planting of native broadleaf species in those counties which have lost more than one third of their ancient woodland since 1930.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* The area of broadleaves planted in Britain has quadrupled over the last decade. Some 7,500 hectares of broadleaves have, on average, been planted each year during the last five years, as compared with an average of 1,800 hectares during the previous seven years. Nearly all the planting was carried out with native species.

The Government's policy is that there should be a continuing expansion of the area of native woodland in Britain.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, column *369*, he will make a statement about the number of hectares of non-native species and native broadleaf species that have been planted in each year since 1984.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* Information in this detail is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Local Enterprise Companies

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make extra money for out-of-school care available to LECs in Scotland on the same basis as to training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* Our manifesto made it clear that we would introduce a new grant to help employers, voluntary groups or schools to set up after-school care and holiday arrangements for the

children of working mothers and that this would be paid through local enterprise companies. We shall take the need to resource such grants into account in our planning of future public expenditure provision for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Appeal Tribunals

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what proportion of members of disability appeal tribunals are also members of social security appeal tribunals.

Mr. Scott: Responsibility for the recruitment of people to serve as members of disability appeal tribunals lies with the president of the Independent Tribunals Service, his honour Judge Holden, and the hon. Member may wish to contact his office direct to obtain this information.

Young Persons (Benefit)

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what benefits are available to a young person with a permanent home who is not on a youth training scheme.

Mr. Burt: Young people may be entitled to the following benefits subject to meeting the qualifying conditions:

Non-contributory Benefits
Child Benefit
Community Charge Benefit
Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit
Disability Living Allowance
Disability Working Allowance
Family Credit
Guardian's Allowance
Housing Benefit
Income Support
Invalid Care Allowance
One Parent Benefit
Severe Disablement Allowance
Social Fund payments
Statutory Maternity Pay
Statutory Sick Pay

Contributory Benefits
Invalidity Benefit
Maternity Allowance
Sickness Benefit
Unemployment Benefit
Widows Payment
Widowed Mother's Allowance

Resettlement

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last met the chief executive of the Resettlement Agency; and what was the result of the meeting.

Miss Widdecombe: I have met the chief executive on many occasions to discuss the whole range of the agency's business. The last occasion was on 5 March 1992. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, expects to meet the chief executive in the near future.

National Insurance

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what circumstances it may be necessary for persons in receipt of income support to pay class 3 national insurance contributions in order to protect their future pension rights; and whether he will amend the income support regulations to enable such contributions to be taken into account in assessing their benefit entitlement.

Mr. Burt: Many people receiving income support have national insurance contributions credited to their account in order to protect their future pension rights, for example, where they are receiving a contributory social security benefit or they are registered as unemployed. Others may have their pension rights protected by home responsibility protection (HRP) which applies to people who are unable to work regularly because they are required to stay at home to look after a child or sick or disabled person.

Where there is no entitlement to credits or HRP and any earnings from part-time employment are below the lower earnings limit at which liability for class 1 contributions commences, people may choose to pay voluntary class 3 contributions to the level required to make a tax year a qualifying one for pension purposes.

There are no plans to change the income support regulations to take such payments into account.

Industrial Injuries Advisory Council

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he received the report of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council on work-related upper limb disorders; and how soon he will act upon the findings.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) on 21 May at column *241*.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average length of time taken to determine an application for the disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested.

Residential Care

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will distinguish the living support, housing and care elements in income support for residential care; what studies he has undertaken to distinguish these elements; and whether he will place the results of these studies in the Library.

Mr. Burt: The income support limits do not include separate amounts for specific items of expenditure.

Social Fund

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the percentage of *(a)* budgeting loans and *(b)* community care grants which were awarded to each of the 15 client groups defined by his Department for the Doncaster area; and what were the comparable national figures for the financial years (i) 1989-90, (ii) 1990-91, (iii) 1991-92 and (iv) 1992-93 to date.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the

Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Community Care Grants

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what revision of priorities he has undertaken in respect of those claiming social fund community care grants.

Mr. Scott: The Secretary of State's and local guidance on priorities regarding community care grants is kept under regular review; any necessary adjustments are published in the "Social Fund Officer's Guide"; up to date copies of the guide are available in the Library.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the 1991-92 allocation for social fund community care grants, benefit agency by benefit agency, and the allocation for 1992-93.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is available in the Library.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give as a percentage figure the budget increase for 1992-93 over 1991-92 for social fund community care grant allocations and the percentage increase in the number of claimants for the social fund community care grant for 1991-92.

Mr. Scott: Figures on social fund applicants are not available in the precise form requested; but information concerning budget allocations and the number of community care grant applications is available in the Library.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the social fund community care grant to meet the needs of claimants in Stoke on Trent; what targets have been set; and if he will give a breakdown of the levels of outstanding claims; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for 1991-92 in respect of the Stoke on Trent benefits agency in percentage terms the numbers of (i) homeless and (ii) other categories of claimant who *(a)* qualified for social fund community care grants and *(b)* received social fund community care grants.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out the objectives which the social fund community care grants are required to meet and list those client groups entitled to social fund community care grants.

Mr. Scott: The objectives of community care grants are set out in the Secretary of State's directions, and guidance on their interpretation is set out in the "Social Fund Officer's Guide", copies of which are available in the Library. This includes details of client groups.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will assess the implications for those seeking a social fund community care grant of his decision to limit the budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Research into the operation of the fund, including community care grants, has already been commissioned from the social policy research unit of York university and is due to be published shortly. We will be looking at the results carefully.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the rate of interest to be charged on national insurance contributions underpaid under SI 1992 No. 632; and what publicity he has given to small businesses about these new penalties.

Miss Widdecombe: Interest on late paid national insurance contributions will be charged at the same rate as that charged by the Inland Revenue on late paid tax (currently 10 per cent.). The charges will apply from 19 April 1993 in respect of payments due in the 1992-93 tax year; they are being publicised by the Inland Revenue, and will be explained in DSS guidance to employers.

Expatriate Pensioners

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to pay expatriate pensioners living in Commonwealth countries their full qualified and annually adjusted pensions, on the same basis as paid to expatriate pensioners living in European Community countries.

Miss Widdecombe: United Kingdom pensioners living in the following Commonwealth countries receive annual uprating increases to their state retirement and widows pensions: Barbados, Cyprus, Jamaica, Malta and Mauritius. We have no plans to extend payment of such increases to pensioners living in other Commonwealth countries.

Children Act 1989

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to provide entitlement to additional income support for parents with children subject to residence orders under the Children Act 1989, comparable with the entitlement applying under care orders prior to the enactment of the Children Act 1989.

Mr. Burt: A parent who receives child benefit for a child who is the subject of a residence order, is already entitled to the child personal allowance in any calculation of income support.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the rights to claim income support and other benefits in addition to the basic single person's allowance, for those parents who are separated from their children by a residence order under the provisions of the Children Act 1989, but are subsequently given access rights to their children by court order for parts of the day or week, including *(a)* overnight stays and *(b)* shorter periods.

Mr. Burt: Under the income support scheme child personal allowances are payable to the parent who is adjudged to have primary responsibility for the child. We have no plans for change.

Students

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much was paid to students in the 1991 summer vacation following the decision to restore 10 per cent. of access funding to students facing hardship; what plans he has to take similar steps this year; how much was saved by his Department over the past year following the abolition of benefits previously paid to students; how much has been allocated in 1992 for access funds; how many claimants previously qualifed for and claimed benefits; and how many are in receipt of access funds.

Mr. Burt: Changes to the benefit arrangements for students were introduced alongside the enhanced support available through the educational maintenance system.

The reduction in expenditure on income support and housing benefit was estimated to be £91 million for the 1990-91 academic year.

There were some 135,000 claims for income support from students during the summer vacation in 1989, the most recent date for which information is available. Data for August 1990 indicate that 19,000 students were in receipt of housing benefit during the summer vacation immediately before the benefit changes were introduced.

Matters relating to access funds are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Sources: Special Exercise to record all student claims for Income Support during the 1989 summer vacation.
The Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit Management Information System quarterly stock count for August 1990.

EMPLOYMENT

Training and Enterprise Councils

16. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions she has had with TEC chairmen about adequate funding for TECs.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend has already met TEC chairmen on a number of occasions and will do so on a regular basis. The purpose of those meetings is to ensure that TECs continue to play an effective part in meeting our training and enterprise objectives.

Durham TEC

17. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what level of funding has been made available to Durham training and enterprise council this year compared to the last financial year for delivering employment training and youth training programmes.

Mr. McLoughlin: County Durham TEC's budgets for 1992-93 are £12,986,767 for YT and £16,731,143 for ET. This compares to £15,719,999 and £20,808,873 respectively for 1991-92.

Unemployment

18. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she next plans to meet her European counterparts to discuss unemployment in the EC.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I shall next be meeting European Community Employment Ministers at the Social Affairs Council later this month. Whenever I meet my counterparts I emphasise to them the importance of avoiding action which will cost jobs in the Community. The promotion of employment growth, enterprise and help for unemployed people will be a top priority for the United Kingdom Presidency.

Essex TEC

19. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the performance of the Essex TEC.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Last year Essex TEC provided a total of 4,585 places in youth training, 3,588 in employment training, and 424 people participated in the business start-up programme.

Health and Safety Inspectors

20. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current number of health and safety inspectors currently employed; and what is the current number of vacancies.

Mr. McLoughlin: On 1 May 1992, there were 1,491 inspectors in post in the Health and Safety Executive. HSE aims to have a further 101 inspectors in post by 1 April 1993.

Labour Statistics

21. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the increase in unemployment in the United Kingdom in the past 12 months.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In the 12 months to April 1992, seasonally adjusted claimant unemployment in the United Kingdom, rose by 528,700 or 24 per cent.

27. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her current estimate of the total of people who are engaged in more than one job and thus counted more than once in the employment totals.

Mr. McLoughlin: Precise information on the number of people with more than one job included in the published work force in employment estimates is not available.

However, the labour force survey estimated that 737,000 people held a second job as an employee in the spring of 1991.

Inner-city Unemployment

22. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what help is offered to the unemployed in inner-city areas.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department, through the Employment Service and the network of training and enterprise councils, currently offers unemployed people a

wider range of help than ever before in finding jobs or gaining the skills they need to compete for jobs. Many of our programmes are focused on long-term unemployed people and are, therefore, of particular benefit to inner city areas. We have sought to ensure that inner city residents and people from the ethnic minorities have access to these programmes by employing many specialists and outreach staff and by publishing literature in a number of minority languages. Training opportunities and jobs are one of the central features of the city challenge programme.

Engineering Skills

23. **Ms. Coffey:** To ask the Secretary of State for employment what plans she has for increasing the number of training places available in Stockport for young people to learn engineering skills.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government have given training and enterprise councils the responsibility and resources to plan and deliver training which is most appropriate to meet local needs.

The Stockport area is covered by Stockport and High Peak training and enterprise council and we are satisfied that it has adequate training places available for the young people in its area who wish to enter the engineering industry.

In addition the training and enterprise council plans to increase its engineering provision with the introduction of a new course leading to the achievement of a national vocational qualification level three in two years.

Industrial Action

24. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many working days were lost due to industrial action in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1991 and *(c)* the last 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There were just 0·7 million working days lost through industrial action in the 12 months to March 1992, the latest available period, and 0·8 million working days lost in the whole of 1991. These compare with 29 million working days lost in 1979.

Equal Opportunities

25. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she will make a statement on the Government's policy concerning achieving equality of outcome in employment for minority groups.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government are fully committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in the labour market for all.

The Department takes every opportunity to encourage employers to recognise the value—to themselves as well as to the community—of sound equal opportunities policies and practices in the workplace, and where necessary to provide practical help and advice. A recent example is the Department's 10-point plan pack for employers. Offering practical guidance on the developlment of appropriate policies, the pack underlines the message that the pursuit of equal opportunities is not only in the interests of minority groups. It also makes good business sense for employers to make the best possible use of all the human resources available to them.

The Government's commitment to equal opportunities in employment is also applied through training and enterprise councils and the Employment Service, in the delivery of their programmes and services and by the Government as an employer itself.

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will name the members of the small high level working group which will advise her on issues relevant to women's opportunities in the workplace and beyond.

Mr. McLoughlin: The first members are as follows:

LADY HOWE
Chairman
Business in the Community's Women's Economic Development Team.

Responsible for Opportunity 2000 (and former Deputy Chairman Equal Opportunities Commission).

JOANNA FOSTER
Chairman
Equal Opportunities Commission

SUE SLIPMAN
Director
National Council for One Parent Families

BARONESS DENTON
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Department of Trade and Industry and Government Co-chair, Women's National Commission

SUE RORSTAD
Chairman and Managing Director
Poppies UK Ltd.

PETER DAVIES
Chief Executive
Reed International Plc

KAY COLEMAN
Chief Executive
Harveys & Co. (clothing) Ltd.

GRAHAM MILLAR
Managing Director
Rowntree Mackintosh Confectionary Ltd.

DR. SUSAN MCRAE
Senior Fellow
Policy Studies Institute

SIR BRYAN NICHOLSON
Chairman,
Post Office
Chairman,
National Council for Vocational Qualifications; Former Chairman, Manpower Services Commission

MARGARET SEYMOUR
Managing Director
Seymour Swimming Pool Engineers

Working Time Directive

26. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress is being made on the matter of the working time directive; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I am determined through constructive discussions with our Community partners to continue to protect employers and employees in the United Kingdom against arbitrary and unnecessary restrictions.

Training Schemes

28. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 and 17-year-olds in the Sheffield area are not at present on youth training programmes.

Mr. McLoughlin: Exact figures are not available, but I understand that the Sheffield TEC considers that the YT guarantee is being met.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment under what circumstances citizens from other European Community countries may participate in youth or employment training or in other employment and training schemes financed by the Employment Department; once having entered a programme whether they are entitled to complete it; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Non-United Kingdom European Community nationals are generally eligible to participate in the full range of employment and training services and programmes funded by the Employment Department through the Employment Service and training and enterprise councils. This is conditional, however, on their meeting the relevant eligibility criteria for the programmes and services in question which apply to United Kingdom nationals. Having entered a programme, non-United Kingdom European Community nationals have a full entitlement to complete it.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people are currently on youth training schemes; what were the numbers in comparable schemes five, 10 and 15 years ago; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The latest estimates for the number of young people on YT or receiving training credits is 295,800 at March 1992. Before 1978-79, Government-sponsored schemes were not aimed specifically at providing training for young people comparable with YTS/YT and thus there are no separate figures for 15 years ago. The table gives the number of young people for the other periods asked for.

Young people on Government sponsored schemes in Great Britain

	March 1979	*March 1982*	*March 1987*	[2]*March 1992*
Programme	YOP	YOP	YTS	YT
On Scheme	68,200	197,800	303,800	295,800
Receiving Training[1]	8,900	25,700	ALL	ALL

Notes: [1] YOP was initially set up to provide work experience opportunities, training formed only a small part of some of the YOP programmes. The numbers are estimates only.
[2] Estimated figures.
Sources of information: YOP: YOP Management Information System.
YTS: 'Spectrum' YTS Management Information System.
YT: OSMOSIS and Financial Management Information systems.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she expects to be the earliest opportunity for the introduction of legislation to enable appropriate additional jurisdiction to be conferred on industrial tribunals.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment expects to make provision to extend the jurisdiction of industrial tribunals in a Bill that she will be presenting in the current session of Parliament.

Teesside TEC

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the firms and training organisations to which the Teesside TEC has overpaid grants in the last financial year.

Mr. McLoughlin: Contracts between TECs and their training providers are confidential matters for the parties involved. I am unable, therefore, to disclose the information requested.

Health and Safety

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she will introduce legislation to reduce or to remove Crown immunity against prosecutions for offences under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

Mr. McLoughlin: The citizens charter recognised that Government activities should not be immune from inspection and enforcement on matters such as health and safety regulations. The Crown is already required to comply with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and the relevant statutory provisions. Crown bodies are inspected to that end, and there is provision for a Crown notice procedure. The Crown remains immune from criminal prosecution and there are no plans to change that position. However, the adequacy of the current Crown notice procedure is under review, in line with the principles outlined in the citizens charter.

EC Social Proposals

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the experts her Department consults on European Community proposals pertaining to social matters.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment consults widely on European Community proposals in the employment and social field. Employers and their organisations, professional associations and other interested bodies, trades unions and specialists are consulted as appropriate. The precise list of consultees depends on the nature of the proposal in question. In matters relating to health and safety at work, the Secretary of State is advised by the Health and Safety Commission.

Interwork Programme

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give the allocation for 1991-92 and 1992-93 for the interwork programme; how many disabled

people were budgeted for under this programme in 1991-92 and for 1992-93; and of those how many disabled people are benefiting from the programme in Stoke on Trent.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service Agency are the responsibility of the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Social Charter

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she expects to meet her EC colleagues to discuss developments relating to the social charter.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment will be meeting European Community ministers later this month at the Social Affairs Council when a number of proposals from the European Commission's social action programme are due to be discussed.

Working Hours

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals she has for the introduction of maximum weekly working hours in compliance with the draft European Community directive; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government see no justification for general and compulsory limits on the working week. Negotiations are continuing on the European Community proposals on working hours to seek to protect employers and employees in the United Kingdom from arbitrary and unnecessary restrictions.

Women Workers

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she has any plans to improve the treatment of women at work.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Within the new machinery of government changes that I announced on 20 May, I shall be seeking to identify particular areas where further action would be appropriate to help advance women's opportunities at work.

ENVIRONMENT

New Policies

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, by date, any new policies he has announced since his appointment in either media interviews or at other public events.

Mr. Howard: Since my appointment, and before it became possible to make announcements to the House, I announced the following new policies by way of press announcements: the provision of up to $1 million to help rescue the non-governmental organisations' Global Forum taking place in Rio this month—press notice 295, dated 3 May; a 25 per cent. increase in recycling investment—press notice 283, dated 27 April; the United Kingdom's signature of the agreement to protect small cetaceans in the North and Baltic seas—press notice 298, dated 5 May.

Ozone Layer

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what support is currently offered by the Government to assist lower income countries to introduce substitutes for chemicals, eliminated by the revised Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply. The Government have offered a contribution of up to $15 million to the Montreal protocol funding mechanism to assist developing country parties to the protocol comply with its controls.

Building Design

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to offer guidelines to building designers to ensure that buildings designed for public use take women's safety needs fully into account.

Mr. Baldry: No. Where it is considered appropriate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State can make regulations with respect to building design with the aim of securing the safety of persons in or about buildings.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take measures to ban the transportation of all toxic and radioactive waste to and from the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Negotiations are in progress on a draft EC Regulation on the supervision and control of shipments of waste within, into and out of the European Community. The Regulation will enable the United Kingdom to ratify the UNEP Basel convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal. The Government believe that all developed countries should become self-sufficient in final disposal of waste, and is pressing for the regulation to include controls to that effect. The Government consider that imports of hazardous waste should continue from developing countries which are unable to deal safely with such waste. Under the current draft of the regulation no exports for final disposal would be allowed from the Community, except to EFTA countries. The Government also consider that international movements of waste for recovery should continue subject to appropriate environmental controls, such as those included in the recent OECD Decision on this subject.

No radioactive waste is imported into the United Kingdom. Spent nuclear fuel is imported but this is a resource which can be reprocessed. Since 1976, British Nuclear Fuels Limited's contracts have contained options for the return of wastes arising from reprocessing nuclear fuel. The Government intend that reprocessing contracts with overseas customers should continue to contain such options, and that these options will be exercised and wastes returned.

Earth Summit

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list *(a)* the number of officials by rank and grade and *(b)* the number of

consultants attending the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, giving details of their class of travel and the total budgeted cost of the delegation.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom delegation will consist of the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Minister for Overseas Development, myself, and 25 officials from DOE, FCO, ODA, DTI, and the Forestry Commission. Official gradings are:

	Number
Senior grade	8
Counsellor/equivalent	5
First secretary/equivalent	11
Third secretary	1

In addition, there are five members of the delegation attached to our diplomatic posts in Brazil. Their gradings are:

	Number
Senior grade	1
Counsellor	1
First secretary	1
Second secretary	2

Eight junior support staff will also attend the conference, as well as 12 NGO observers who will form part of the United Kingdom delegation.

The staff involved will be needed to service not only the plenary sessions of the conference but also the specialised sectoral working groups that will be set up and where much of the detailed negotiating will be done. So far eight informal working groups have been convened and others will be assembled if necessary. Other staff are required to provide office support facilities and to liaise wih the local authorities over such matters as transport and security.

Ministers, their private secretaries and the ambassadors to the United Nations and to Brazil will travel first class; all other delegates will travel club class. The estimated cost of the delegation's travel and subsistence, including hotel costs will be about £190,000. NGOs will be responsible for their own travel and accommodation expenses.

The estimated total administrative cost of the conference, inlcuding office facilities, transport and communications will be about £500,000.

Water Supplies

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the approximate percentage of potable public water supplies in England and Wales leaving service reservoirs which is used for *(a)* industrial or manufacturing processes, *(b)* non-domestic cleaning, *(c)* personal washing and domestic cleansing, including clothes, *(d)* domestic and public water closets, *(e)* garden watering, *(f)* wastage and *(g)* any other major category of use.

Mr. Maclean: We shall include the best obtainable information on the subject in the consultation paper on water conservation which my right hon. Friend has said he will publish shortly. The statistics readily available do not use the same set of categories as the hon. Member has listed.

Bathing Water

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the National Rivers Authority will continue its sampling for salmonella and viruses of designated bathing beaches during the current bathing season.

Mr. Maclean: I understand that the National Rivers Authority will monitor for salmonella at all identified bathing waters and for enteroviruses at bathing waters which failed the coliform standards last season.

Environmental Education

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by his Department in the implementation of the recommendations of the international environmental education programme.

Mr. Maclean: As non-members of UNESCO we have no plans to make a contribution to this programme. This Government's commitment to environmental education was set out in the Environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance" published in 1990 and in subsequent follow up reports.

Mortgage Arrears

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households are in arrears with mortgages by six months or more *(a)* now, *(b)* a year ago and *(c)* two years ago.

Mr. Baldry: Annual information on mortgage arrears for the years 1980-91 is published in the May issue of the Council of Mortgage Lenders' quarterly publication, "Housing Finance", which is held in the House of Commons Library.

Relocation

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of requests from the different regions of the United Kingdom offering locations for redeployed civil servants from Marsham street.

Mr. Howard: Since the announcement by my predecessor on 6 February that No. 2 Marsham street was to be demolished, my Department has received representations on behalf of Nottinghamshire, Pembrokeshire, Plymouth, Sheffield, Tyne and Wear, York and the Wirral. The Department of Transport, who also occupy No. 2 Marsham street, have received approaches in respect of east Kent, Nottinghamshire and York.

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the criteria on which he based the decision to relocate civil servants from his Department to Canary Wharf.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the criteria *(a)* previously used and *(b)* proposed to be used by his Department in assessing the value for money of alternative locations for the staff he proposes to move from Marsham street.

Mr. Howard: I have decided to move staff of my Department to Docklands; Canary Wharf is only one of

the properties being considered. The posts which are being relocated need to remain within London because they carry out work which requires regular contact with Ministers. I have decided on a move to Docklands because the advice I have received is that the best value for money which is currently available is to be found there. Some 2,000 posts will relocate to Docklands, provided that we secure fully commercial terms giving value for money to the taxpayer. In deciding between properties in Docklands I shall consider non-financial factors (such as the quality of the working environment; the efficiency, accessibility and environmental standards of the buildings; and the convenience and safety of staff) as well as financial ones.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future location of the 3,000 civil servants from his Department who are not to be transferred to Canary Wharf.

Mr. Howard: I have decided to move staff of my Department to docklands; Canary Wharf is only one of the properties being considered. Other staff will continue to be located elsewhere in London, including Westminster, or in their existing locations outside. A large number of posts have already been moved out of London over recent years, and some 40 per cent. of my staff now work outside London. Those who remain in the capital are those with a need for regular contact with Ministers.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to publish the full terms of any lease taken on premises in docklands to accommodate staff of his Department moved from Marsham street.

Mr. Baldry: No. Any lease taken for premises in docklands will be the result of a commercial negotiation and as such will be confidential to the Department and the developer concerned in accordance with long-established policy in these matters.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals to bus in staff relocated to docklands.

Mr. Howard: I have undertaken to put in place arrangements to help to minimise the effects of a move to docklands on the staff of my Department. The details have yet to be settled.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his current estimate of redundancies arising from the demolition of the Marsham street offices and the relocation in docklands.

Mr. Howard: Staff in non-mobile grades who choose not to move to docklands will be eligible for redundancy.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the office rentals available in docklands in the first *(a)* five, *(b)* 10 and *(c)* 20 years compared with those available in (i) Sheffield and (ii) elsewhere outside London.

Mr. Baldry: Current rents and terms now on offer in docklands compare favourably with other parts of the United Kingdom.

The possibility of the large rental increases in the future has been foreseen and my officials are considering how best that risk can be minimised in the negotiations referred to in the Secretary of State's statement of 2 June on this matter.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the alternative sites he considered as possible locations for staff to be transferred from Marsham street; and if he will give the reasons in each case why such sites have been rejected.

Mr. Howard: My Department's advisers identified four locations as best meeting the Department's needs for relocation within London, all of them in docklands. I have ruled out one of those four, Thomas More square, Wapping, because it is very much more expensive than the other three. Three—Harbour Exchange, Canary Wharf and East India Dock—remain under consideration.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of office sites in Sheffield as a potential destination for staff relocated from Marsham street; and if he will list the criteria which caused a site in docklands to be preferred.

Mr. Howard: The staff of my Department who are to be relocated to docklands need to be in London because they need to have regular contacts with Ministers. The question of assessing sites in Sheffield does not arise.

Drought

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to ensure the continuity of water supply in times of drought.

Mr. Maclean: Primary responsibility for maintaining public water supplies rests with the water companies. The National Rivers Authority (NRA) also have a general statutory responsibility for conserving, redistributing and augmenting water resources and securing their proper use. My Department has for some months been holding regular meetings with the NRA, the Office of Water Services and the water companies to ensure necessary liaison and that we are aware of action (such as the consideration of applications for drought orders) that will be needed by the Department.

I have written to all Members of Parliament, including my hon. Friend, in the areas which may be affected by water shortages this summer to explain the situation in greater detail. My right hon. Friend proposes to issue a consultation paper on water conservation shortly.

Methane

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much is currently being allocated by his Department to research institutions to develop ways of reducing methane emissions.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has responsibility for controlling methane emissions from landfill sites. Currently we are funding projects on the design of landfill gas flaring systems and on optimising methane oxidation in landfill cover soils. These projects have a total value of £200,000.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been allocated by his Department for the forthcoming year to undertake publicity campaigns to promote more efficient energy use in homes, offices, industry and transport.

Mr. Maclean: The Department has allocated £6·3 million for publicity and information promotion on energy efficiency during 1992-93.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give a breakdown of sums allocated to cover the cost of enterprise zones *(a)* by individual enterprise zone, *(b)* in total for the United Kingdom and *(c)* including sums which would have accrued from changes in rateable values or increases in capital values over the period of the life of the enterprise zone.

Mr. Redwood: The table shows outturn costs for rate revenue forgone in United Kingdom enterprise zones up to 31 March 1990. No comparable figures are available for other enterprise zone allowances.

Compensation for rates revenue forgone up to 31 March 1990

Enterprise zone	*£ million*
England	
Allerdale	2·721
Corby	20·964
Dudley	26·087
Glanford	1·124
Hartlepool	5·193
Isle of Dogs	37·593
Middlesbrough	4·264
North East Lancashire	6·370
North West Kent	14·046
Rotherham	8·135
Salford/Trafford	36·678
Scunthorpe	9·737
Speke	14·522
Telford	10·958
Tyneside	55·588
Wakefield	8·495
Wellingborough	7·131
Wales	
Delyn	3·549
Milford Haven	3·149
Swansea	15·817
Scotland	
Clydebank / Inverclyde	[1]20·381
Invergordon	0·769
Tayside	5·454
Northern Ireland	
Belfast	9·899
Londonderry	4·240
UNITED KINGDOM TOTAL	332·865

[1] Not available separately.

It is not possible to say how much of the above total has resulted from changes in rateable values.

Water Meters

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on increasing the use of water meters.

Mr. Maclean: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave on 2 June 1992 to my hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) *Official Report*, column *383*.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information the Office of Water Services has on how many water meters are installed in each water authority area.

Mr. Maclean: About 0·5 million domestic properties and 1·1 million commercial and industrial properties in England and Wales receive water on a metered supply. Details of the number of metered properties in each water company area are contained in OFWAT publication entitled "The UK Water Industry—Charges for water services 1992-93", copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information OFWAT has on what changes in the consumption of water have been brought about where water meters have been installed.

Mr. Maclean: Information from the national water metering trials funded by DOE and the water industry indicates that in the large scale Isle of Wight trial the amount of water put into supply has fallen by 11·1 per cent., of which it is estimated that 5·9 per cent. was the result of reductions in leakage. In the small scale trials demand has reduced on average by 13·1 per cent. although the effect in individual trials ranged from −29·6 per cent. to +2·3 per cent. In these trials, it is estimated that reductions in leakage accounted for 5·1 per cent. of the average reduction.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment OFWAT has made of whether average water bills have increased or decreased in areas where water meters have been introduced.

Mr. Maclean: Information from the national water metering trial areas indicates that about 65 per cent. of customers paid the same as or less than they would have paid on a rateable value basis. About 20 per cent. of customers paid over 20 per cent. more.

National Water Grid

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has plans to establish a national water grid.

Mr. Maclean: Bulk supplies of water are already transferred over considerable distances in a number of cases. The National Rivers Authority (NRA) considers further possible schemes in its consultation paper "Water Resources Development Strategy" published in March. It will be for the National Rivers Authority and the water companies to decide whether they believe any such scheme should be promoted.

Incinerators

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the current statutory regulations used by Her Majesty's inspectorate of Pollution in respect of waste or sewage incinerators both individually and severally; and what are the comparable standards adopted by France, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium, respectively.

Mr. Maclean: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP) controls those processes involving the incineration of waste or sewage sludge which are described in "The Environmental Protection (Prescribed Processes and Substances) Regulations 1991 (SI 472) and The Environmental Protection (Prescribed Processes and Substances) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (SI 614) issued under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. These require each process to be individually authorised and for the best available technologies not entailing excessive cost to be used by the operator to prevent or reduce emissions from the process.

To provide guidance on the standards to be applied, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution issues guidance notes to its inspectors relating to the processes it controls. These provide a sound framework within which Inspectors can assess applications for the authorisation of new processes and existing processes. The notes are also publicly available for the benefit of operators and other interested parties.

I recently announced (*Official Report*, 21 May, column *197*), the publication of those notes relating to processes in the waste disposal and recycling sector which includes these three incineration processes.

I will write to the hon. Member about the question of how the standards applied in England and Wales compare with those of the four countries cited.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the incentives currently available to encourage the development of more energy-efficient processes and vehicles by industry.

Mr. Maclean: The energy efficiency office promotes detailed technical and economic advice to industry on energy efficient processes through its best practice. The EEO also supports consultancy help in the management of energy efficiency investments in smaller industrial companies.

Energy efficiency in transport is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport to a question by the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on 2 June at column *522*.

Rents-to-Mortgages Scheme

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average value of properties sold to tenants under the pilot rents-to-mortgages schemes in Basildon and Milton Keynes; what was the average initial payment made by tenants under the schemes; and what proportion of sales have been flats.

Mr. Baldry: Most of the houses sold in Milton Keynes were worth £40,000 to £50,000; in Basildon, most were worth over £50,000. Information on the initial payment made is at present available only for Milton Keynes, where more than half the tenants paid between £15,000 and £20,000. Four out of the 103 properties sold have been flats.

North Tyneside (Urban Programme)

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state for each year since its inception the amount of funding under the urban programme allocated to the North Tyneside area at *(a)* cash prices and *(b)* 1991-92 prices.

Mr. Squire: Figures for urban programme allocations to North Tyneside are only available in the Department from 1979-80 when the programme was transferred from the Home Office. The information is as follows:

(a) At cash prices

Year	*£ million*
1979-80	1·400
1980-81	2·749
1981-82	2·335
1982-83	2·940
1983-84	3·437
1984-85	3·155
1985-86	3·245
1986-87	3·605
1987-88	3·555
1988-89	3·442
1989-90	3·400
1990-91	3·625
1991-92	3·560
1992-93	3·371

(b) At 1991-92 prices

Year	*£ million*
1979-80	3·255
1980-81	5·401
1981-82	4·184
1982-83	4·918
1983-84	5·495
1984-85	4·803
1985-86	4·682
1986-87	5·036
1987-88	4·710
1988-89	4·255
1989-90	3·946
1990-91	3·879
1991-92	3·560
1992-93	3·233

Traffic, Greenwich

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action is being taken by his Department to measure the extent of atomospheric pollution attributable to emissions from motor vehicles in the Greenwich area; and what information is available on this matter.

Mr. Maclean: My Department commissioned a study of nitrogen dioxide levels throughout the United Kingdom using diffusion tubes during 1991. As part of this survey, levels of this pollutant of which the major source is motor traffic were measured in the Greenwich area. The report of this study was published last month by Warren Spring laboratory and is available in the Library of the House.

Black smoke concentrations have been rising over the last few years in the Greenwich area. This increase is thought to be due to increasing particulate emissions from diesel vehicles in the locality.

Mineral Planning Authority

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of state for the Environment who are the members of the mineral planning authority covering the Kirklees area; when they were appointed to this authority; and by whom.

Mr. Baldry: I regret that this information is not held by the Department.

Hunterprint

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what printing contracts the company Hunterprint had, or has outstanding with his Department related to *(a)* water privatisation and *(b)* any other matters; and if he will give the dates and details of the nature and the subject matter of the printed material for each contract.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 5 June 1992]:* The company Hunterprint was contracted by my Department, following competitive tender, to print the flotation brochure included in the information pack for the launch of the sale of the water companies of England and Wales in 1989. Some 3 million copies were produced in English and 250,000 copies in Welsh.

No other contracts with this firm are recorded.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent applications his Department has received from the Australian Government supporting the plans of the Australian companies Carpentaria and Brambles, Australia, respectively, to import toxic waste into the United Kingdom from Australia for treatment; and what response has been made.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 5 June 1992]:* The Australian Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories has written to my Department to seek a bilateral agreement under article 11 of the United Nations Environment Programme Basle convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal. This would allow Australia to ship such waste to the United Kingdom for disposal. I have decided not to agree to the request, and we are replying accordingly.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to his answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, columns *369-70*, whether sites of special scientific interest will, in future, be protected from any depradation by agriculture, quarrying or any other activity.

Mr. Maclean: *[holding answer 9 June 1992]:* Development proposals in or near sites of special scientific interest are strictly controlled either through the measures set out in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended, or the planning system.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each of the branches of the local government finance policy division of his Department *(a)* the total number of staff, analysed by grade, *(b)* the total salary costs, *(c)* the policy responsibilities and *(d)* the measurements of policy outcomes used to appraise the branch for the purposes of MINIS and the branch's achievements in the most recent MINIS report.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* The information is as follows:

POLICY RESPONSIBILITIES

Finance Local Taxation Division (FLT)

Monitoring and operation of the Community Charge; monitoring and operation of non-domestic rates, including payments for Valuation Office Agency services and planning for the 1995 non-domestic revaluation; oversight of Valuation Tribunals; preparation for Council Tax.

Finance Local Authority Grants Division (FLG)

Annual local government finance settlement; collection and payment of non-domestic rates and grant; PES and Vote management; sponsorship of the Audit Commission; commutation.

Finance Local Authority Grants and Revenue Division (FLGR)

Standard Spending Assessments and Revenue Support Grant.

Finance Local Authority Expenditure and Revenues Division (FLER)

Local Authority accounting advice; council tax and community charge setting, precepting, levying, capping and funds.

Finance Local Capital Division (FLC)

Capital allocations to authorities; monitoring operation of capital finance system; local authority financial prudence.

Finance Local Authority Statistics Division (FLAS)

Collection and analysis of data; forecasting and briefing.

STAFF AND SALARY COSTS

Staff numbers at 31 March 1992.

Salary costs for year ending 31 March 1992.

	G5	*G7*	*SEO*	*HEO*	*EO*	*AO*	*AA*	*Salary cost* £
FLT	1	3	3	4·5	7	8	4	604,000
FLG	1	3	—	4	7	2	1	392,000
FLGR	1	3	—	2	3	2	—	248,000
FLER	1	4	1	3	2	3	1	191,000
FLC	1	2	—	3	1	3	1	224,000
FLAS	1	5	3	4	8	10	1	598,000

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

For the purposes of MINIS the Directorate's declared objectives and proposed tasks are compared with what has been achieved during the year, taking into account all relevant factors including the resources used.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the regulations still to be made under the Local Government Finance Act 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* The following regulations arising from the Local Government Finance Act 1992 have still to be made for England:

Appeals
The Council Tax (Alteration of List) Regulations
Valuation Tribunals Regulations

Valuation
The Domestic Property (Definition) Regulations

Tax Setting, Precepting, Levying and Funds
Collection Fund Regulations
Levying Body Regulations
Anticipation of Precepts Regulations
Information for Tax Setting Purposes Regulations

Council Tax Benefit and Transitional Arrangements
Council Tax Benefit Regulations [to be made by the Department of Social Security]
The Council Tax (Reduction Scheme) (England) Regulations

Administration and Enforcement
The Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rating (Demand Notices) (England) Regulations

Miscellaneous
Commencement Orders (Consequential Amendments and Repeals)
Consequential Amendments, Repeals etc Order
Netting Off Regulations

National Non-Domestic Rate
Duty to consult Ratepayers Regulations
Non-Domestic Rating Contributions (Final Adjustments) Regulations
Non-Domestic Rating Contributions (England) (Amendment) Regulations
Non-Domestic Rating Interest (Amendment) Regulations

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how the capping criteria for Cheltenham borough council and Gloucester city council for 1992-93 were adjusted to take into account the misallocation of grant to these councils in 1991-92; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what account was taken of boundary changes in fixing grant allocations to local authorities in Gloucestershire for 1991-92; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will visit Cheltenham to discuss his 1992-93 grant allocation with councillors and other residents' representatives.

Mr. Squire *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* The boundary changes affecting Gloucestershire districts occurred too late to be taken into account in 1991-92 standard spending assessments and hence in revenue support grant distribution. Instead, compensating payments were made between the authorities concerned.

Allowance is made for these boundary changes in the 1992-93 SSAs in accordance with the procedure set out in paragraph 12 of the Revenue Support Grant Distribution (Amendment) (No. 2) Report (England), which was approved by the House of Commons on 4 February 1992. In the circumstances, I believe that it would not be appropriate to visit Cheltenham to discuss the 1992-93 RSG distribution.

SSAs are central to the capping criteria for 1992-93; hence we consider the criteria we have adopted make appropriate allowance for the effect of the boundary changes.

Gloucester's total SSA for 1992-93 is 13·1 per cent. higher than for 1991-92. That of Cheltenham is 16·7 per cent. higher. These increases in large part reflect the boundary changes.

HEALTH

Residential Care

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the Government's plans on implementation of the findings of *(a)* the Howe inquiry and *(b)* the report by Sir William Utting.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave her on 5 June at column *670*. Implementation of the recommendations in Sir William Utting's report is being coordinated by a group chaired by the Department and including local authority, professional, voluntary sector and other Government Department interests.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on those recommendations of the Howe inquiry which give an emphasis on training; and what assessment she has made of the inclusion in the diploma in social work course of enhanced training specifically on residential care.

Dr. Mawhinney: We shall be giving careful consideration to all the recommendations of the Howe inquiry which are relevant to our responsibilities.

The Government are strongly committed to improving social work training; this commitment is embodied in the training strategy for the personal social services which we announced last year. Particularly, we are assisting local authorities to fulfil their responsibilities for training staff through the Department's training support programme, central grant for which has been increased from £24·8 million to £29 million in 1992-93. Approximately 140,000 local authority staff are expected to benefit from training under this programme this year, nearly half of whom work in residential care. Funds have been reserved from the grant this year specifically to boost the output of qualifying training for residential child care staff. Further funds have been provided to the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work to provide grants for qualifying training for heads of voluntary children's homes.

The Department has also funded an expert group to look at the content of diploma in social work courses for residential child care staff. This report is expected very shortly.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide extra funds to local authorities to cover extra training for staff working in residential care.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department is already providing extra funds to local authorities for training through the training support programme specific grant. The grant was introduced in 1988-89 at a level of £7 million and has been increased year on year to its current level of £29 million. Approximately half of the 140,000 staff expected to benefit from training under the programme work in residential care.

NHS Consultants

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the annual cost of distinction awards paid to national health service consultants in England over the period 1982-1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of national health service consultants in each specialty get distinction awards, A+, A, B and C; and of these what proportion do private practice.

Dr. Mawhinney: The distribution of distinction awards for England including special health authorities and Wales by specialty at 31 December 1991, the latest date for which information is available, is set out in the table.

Information is not held centrally on the number of award holders undertaking private practice.

Distinction awards: Analysis by type of award, specialty and percentage distribution at 31 December 1991 – England and Wales
The Secretariat, Advisory Committee on Distinction Awards, Department of Health, 426 Portland Court, 158-176 Great Portland Street, London W1N 5TB

	Eligible practitioners		Total		Award holders								Non-award holders	
					A+		A		B		C			
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
All specialties: Total	17,182	100·0	5,930	34·5	194	1·1	674	3·9	1,526	8·9	3,536	20·6	11,252	65·5
Accident and Emergency	218	1·3	44	20·2	—	—	3	1·4	8	3·7	33	15·1	174	79·8
Anaesthetics	2,217	12·9	644	29·0	23	1·0	40	1·8	156	7·0	425	19·2	1,573	71·0
Cardiology	187	1·1	89	47·6	4	2·1	19	10·2	22	11·8	44	23·5	98	52·4
Cardio-thoracic surgery	130	0·8	61	46·9	3	2·3	10	7·7	21	16·2	27	20·8	69	53·1
Clinical neurological physiology	62	0·4	21	33·9	—	—	2	3·2	3	4·8	16	25·8	41	66·1
Oral surgery	264	1·5	118	44·7	3	1·1	17	6·4	29	11·0	69	26·1	146	55·3
Orthodontics	155	0·9	53	34·2	1	0·6	4	2·6	11	7·1	37	23·9	102	65·8
Restorative dentistry	108	0·6	36	33·3	1	0·9	7	6·5	8	7·4	20	18·5	72	66·7
Public health dentistry	7	—	2	28·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	28·6	5	71·4
Dermatology	253	1·5	84	33·2	—	—	14	5·5	20	7·9	50	19·8	169	66·8
Diseases of the chest	116	0·7	61	52·6	1	0·9	7	6·0	12	10·3	41	35·3	55	47·4
General medicine	1,534	8·9	742	48·4	28	1·8	114	7·4	201	13·1	399	26·0	792	51·6
General surgery	1,241	7·2	566	45·6	24	1·9	70	5·6	149	12·0	323	26·0	675	54·4
Genito-urinary medicine	170	1·0	34	20·0	—	—	4	2·4	5	2·9	25	14·7	136	80·0
Geriatric medicine	576	3·4	130	22·6	1	0·2	10	1·7	26	4·5	93	16·1	446	77·4
Infectious diseases	39	0·2	18	46·2	1	2·6	2	5·1	3	7·7	12	30·8	21	53·8
Mental illness	1,298	7·6	371	28·6	11	0·8	36	2·8	93	7·2	231	17·8	927	71·4
Child and adolescent psychiatry	370	2·2	79	21·4	3	0·8	4	1·1	17	4·6	55	14·9	291	78·6
Forensic psychiatry	77	0·4	20	26·0	1	1·3	2	2·6	4	5·2	13	16·9	57	74·0
Mental handicap	173	1·0	29	16·8	—	—	4	2·3	4	2·3	21	12·1	144	83·2
Psychotherapy	102	0·6	22	21·6	—	—	—	—	8	7·8	14	13·7	80	78·4
Neurology	208	1·2	107	51·4	4	1·9	19	9·1	39	18·8	45	21·6	101	48·6
Neurosurgery	106	0·6	62	58·5	4	3·8	13	12·3	24	22·6	21	19·8	44	41·5
Nuclear medicine	31	0·2	16	51·6	1	3·2	5	16·1	8	25·8	2	6·5	15	48·4
Obstetrics and gynaecology	851	5·0	328	38·5	15	1·8	30	3·5	72	8·5	211	24·8	523	61·5
Occupational medicine	25	0·1	3	12·0	—	—	—	—	1	4·0	2	8·0	22	88·0
Ophthalmology	453	2·6	156	34·4	3	0·7	19	4·2	42	9·3	92	20·3	297	65·6
Orthopaedic surgery	790	4·6	284	35·9	8	1·0	23	2·9	61	7·7	192	24·3	506	64·1
Otolaryngology	406	2·4	150	36·9	1	0·2	12	3·0	30	7·4	107	26·4	256	63·1
Paediatrics	856	5·0	307	35·9	12	1·4	31	3·6	84	9·8	180	21·0	549	64·1
Paediatric surgery	52	0·3	23	44·2	—	—	5	9·6	12	23·1	6	11·5	29	55·8
Pathology: general	8	—	3	37·5	—	—	1	12·5	1	12·5	1	12·5	5	62·5
Blood transfusion	32	0·2	11	34·4	1	3·1	2	6·2	4	12·5	4	12·5	21	65·6
Chemical pathology	184	1·1	63	34·2	3	1·6	10	5·4	18	9·8	32	17·4	121	65·8
Haematology	407	2·4	143	35·1	3	0·7	23	5·7	35	8·6	82	20·1	264	64·9
Histopathology	645	3·8	199	30·9	7	1·1	22	3·4	61	9·5	109	16·9	446	69·1
Immunopathology	46	0·3	27	58·7	2	4·3	7	15·2	12	26·1	6	13·0	19	41·3
Medical microbiology	330	1·9	118	35·8	3	0·9	16	4·8	37	11·2	62	18·8	212	64·2
Neuro-pathology	41	0·2	16	39·0	—	—	3	7·3	5	12·2	8	19·5	25	61·0
PHLS only	32	0·2	11	34·4	—	—	3	9·4	3	9·4	5	15·6	21	65·6
Public health medicine	535	3·1	157	29·3	8	1·5	16	3·0	41	7·7	92	17·2	378	70·7
Plastic surgery	124	0·7	43	34·7	—	—	4	3·2	15	12·1	24	19·4	81	65·3
Radiology	1,212	7·1	309	25·5	9	0·7	25	2·1	82	6·8	193	15·9	903	74·5
Radiotherapy	223	1·3	84	37·7	4	1·8	8	3·6	18	8·1	54	24·2	139	62·3
Rheumatology and rehabilitation	288	1·7	86	29·9	1	0·3	8	2·8	21	7·3	56	19·4	202	70·1

Toxic Shock Syndrome

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the number of cases over the last five years of tampon-related toxic shock syndrome; and how many of these have resulted in death.

Mr. Sackville: Statistics from the public health laboratory service indicate that in recent years cases of tampon-related toxic shock syndrome average around 15 per year with one or two deaths for the United Kingdom as a whole.

GP Lists

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the average number of patients per general practitioner in the Durham area in 1979 and 1991.

Dr. Mawhinney: At 1 October 1979, the average number of patients on general medical practitioner lists in the Durham family health services authority area was 2,461 and at 1 October 1991, this has reduced by 19 per cent. to 1,989.

Community Care

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on community care assessments.

Mr. Yeo: From April 1993, when the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 is fully implemented, local authorities will take lead responsibility for assessing individuals' needs for care and arranging packages of care services whether in a person's own home or in a residential care or nursing home. Assessments and the provision of services will often require contributions from other agencies. Assessment of individuals' care needs underpins our proposals and will ensure services are tailored to need.

Homeopathic Medicines

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the prescription of *(a)* evening primrose oil and *(b)* other homeopathic medicines by the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: Two evening primrose oil preparations have been granted product licences by the Medicines Control Agency (MCA), and are available on national health service prescripton for the conditions for which they are licensed. A number of other preparations have been considered by the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances, but the committee considers that they have no therapeutic use in the treatment of disease in the community. They are therefore included in the list of products that cannot be prescribed on the national health service.

General practitioners can prescribe any product which they consider necessary for the treatment of their national health service patients provided it is not included in that list, and provided that they are prepared to justify their prescribing, if challenged, to their family health services authority.

National Health Service Consultants

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the annual regional distribution of distinction awards, A+, A, B and C, paid to national health service consultants by specialty over the period 1982 to 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am arranging for tables showing the distribution of distinction awards, by grade of award, within each specialty for each region, the special health authorities and Wales, for the years ended 31 December 1982 to 1991 inclusive to be placed in the Library.

Volunteers

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health is she has any plans to arrange for volunteers to feed patients who cannot feed themselves; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We welcome the valuable contribution that volunteers make in helping patients in hospital, including, where appropriate, helping those who cannot feed themselves. The extent to which volunteers are used is essentially a local issue which must be decided by the hospital, patient and volunteer concerned.

Imigran

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the drug Imigran used for relief to migraine sufferers, is available on prescription in its *(a)* injection form and *(b)* tablet form; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Both Imigran tablets and injections have been licensed and are available as prescription-only medicines.

Eye Tests

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will publish the latest figures available showing *(a)* the average charge for private sight tests and *(b)* the uptake of private sight tests by the over-60s since restrictions on NHS tests were introduced;

(2) if she will conduct a survey to find out the total number of private sight tests carried out for each year since restrictions on national health service tests were introduced; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department collects information on national health service sight tests only. Other sight tests are private transactions. The optical profession conducts regular surveys on the total number of sight tests, both national health service and private. Their findings indicate that the number of sight tests has returned to 1987 levels —the last typical year before changes in the sight-testing arrangements were announced.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects the proceedings of the board of the London ambulance service to be made public.

Mr. Sackville: The proceedings of the London Ambulance Service Board are not made public. Accountability is exercised through the South West Thames regional health authority whose proceedings are subject to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

Royal Northern Hospital

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultation she is proposing on the loss of wards in the Royal Northern hospital in Islington and Bloomsbury health authority.

Mr. Sackville: The Bloomsbury and Islington health authority consulted interested parties on its proposals to centralise the acute services in Islington on the Archway and St. Mary's sites of the Whittington hospital. Following Islington community health council (CHC) opposition to those proposals the matter was referred to Ministers.

The hon. Member, together with the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and the CHC, met with my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 5 February to discuss those proposals.

I subsequently wrote to the chairman of Bloomsbury and Islington health authority on 1 June, copying the letter to the hon. Member, stating that it would not be right in this case for Ministers to intervene to overturn the decision by local management.

Chiropodists

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will reconsider allowing privately trained and qualified chiropodists to work within the national health service; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: All people employed as chiropodists in the national health service must be state registered, whether or not they were privately trained. There are no plans to change this arrangement.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will initiate a new comparison in the qualifications and working practices of private and national health service practising chiropodists; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. This would be a matter for the profession.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 10 June 1992

HOME DEPARTMENT

Offences

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of males reaching the age of 30 years in 1991, or in the latest year for which statistics are available, had at some time committed *(a)* a notifiable and *(b)* a summary offence.

Mr. Jack: The information is not available in the form requested. Of all males born in 1953, one third had been convicted of a standard list offence by the age of 30. The information has been produced from a series of Cohort studies of persons born in 1953, 1958 and 1963, published in Home Office statistical bulletin issue 32/89 "Criminal and custodial careers of those born in 1953, 1958 and 1963", a copy of which is in the Library.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's arrangements for consulting the Data Protection Registrar during the planning stage of any initiative involving the collection, use or disclosure of personal data; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Officials are aware of the need to consult the registrar about proposed legislation or other initiatives which might affect or be affected by the Data Protection Act 1984, and will consult him as necessary when planning the collection, use or disclosure of automated personal data.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will describe each separate index of personal data stored on the intelligence and investigation unit at Harmondsworth; how many items of data are stored under each index; how many entries are in each index; and what was the number of accesses to each index over the last year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There are two databases on the Immigration Service's intelligence and investigation unit's computer at Harmondsworth which contain personal data:

the ISIIU index contains information considered to be of long term immigration interest;

the United Kingdom passport abuse database contains information about United Kingdom passports which have been detected in fraudulent use.

Individual records in the ISIIU database contain 11 fields of information. Those in the United Kingdom passport abuse database contain 15, of which 11 are the same as in the ISIIU index.

The ISIIU database contains about 500,000 records; the United Kingdom passport abuse database about 3,500. No record is kept of the number of accesses to either database.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will describe, in a form that does not jeopardise the prevention of crime or national security, the circumstances when the security services or the Customs and Excise *(a)* have terminal access to police computers or *(b)* can receive information from police computers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Access to police computer systems and the disclosure of information from these systems and from the police national computer are matters for chief constables.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the effect on privacy of freely available copies of the council tax valuation lists, in relation to the list's combination with *(a)* the electoral register, *(b)* the credit reference agencies and *(c)* vendors of databases derived from public sources; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None. Any evidence of misuse of automated personal information will be investigated by the Data Protection Registrar, who has responsibility for enforcing the Data Protection Act 1984.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many meetings he has held with bodies representing the views of data subjects in relation to the European Commission's proposals for a data protection directive.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None since taking up this post, but the then Minister of State had one such meeting on 21 February 1991. Ministers and officials are regularly informed of the views of all who have an interest in data protection, whether as data subjects or data users.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will describe each category of suspect index made available to officials at ports of entry; how many suspect persons are under each category; how many items of data are stored about each category; and what was the number of accesses made to each index over the last year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There is a single suspect index, the purpose of which is to alert the immigration officer to take action in respect of an individual who might not be identified in the course of routine examination. The index currently contains about 10,000 entries. No record is kept of the number of occasions on which it is consulted by immigration officers.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will describe each separate index of personal data stored on INDECS; how many items of data are stored on INDECS under each index; how many entries are in each index; and what was the number of accesses to each index over the last year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Data are stored on INDECS according to a unique arrival number and relate to the immigration status of individuals given conditional leave to enter the United Kingdom on a non-permanent basis under the terms of the Immigration Act 1971. In each case, details entered on the landing card are recorded together with the expiry date of the leave to enter. The number of data elements linked to the arrival number will range from 20 to 40 according to the conditions applying and the

number of subsequent movements in and out of the United Kingdom. There were 2·8 million records on INDECS at the beginning of June 1992. Information on the number of accesses to the system is not available.

Police Officers (Attacks)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in respect of 1990 and 1991 *(a)* how many police officers were attacked on duty, *(b)* how many of their assailants were charged and *(c)* how many were convicted.

Mr. Jack: Information collected by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary shows that in England and Wales 17,568 police officers were assaulted on duty in 1990 and 18,372 in 1991. No information is collected centrally on how many assailants were charged or convicted. A survey covering the second half of 1991 showed that 2,500 offenders were sentenced for assaults against the police during that period. The results of this survey were published in Home Office Statistical Bulletin 3/92, a copy of which is in the Library.

Trespass

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce a Bill to make trespass a criminal offence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We have no plans to extend the criminal law to all cases of trespass. However the Government recognise that the current law relating to squatting in premises is unsatisfactory and we have recently completed a consultation exercise which sought views on a range of possible options for improving the protection available to owners and legitimate occupiers. We are presently considering what action would be appropriate in the light of responses to that exercise.

Prisons

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list, by prison establishment, the current number of inmates held; what is the recommended establishment per Her Majesty's prison; and what was the comparable figure 12 months ago;

(2) if he will list by Her Majesty's prison establishment, the current number of inmates held per cell; what was the comparable figure 12 months ago; and if he will indicate those establishments where women are held.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of inmates held in each Prison Service establishment in England and Wales and the certified normal accommodation (CNA) for 4 June 1991 and 4 June 1992 for those establishments are shown in the table.

Information on the number of inmates held per cell is not collected centrally. But on 10 May (the latest date for which figures are available) 9,392 inmates were being held two to a cell designed for one, 1,294 fewer than 12 months ago. The number of prisoners being held three to a cell designed for one was 1,038 which was 969 fewer than in May 1991.

Establishment	*Population 4 June 1991*	*Certified normal accommodation 4 June 1991*	*Population 4 June 1992*	*Certified normal accommodation 4 June 1992*
Acklington	514	676	626	676
Albany	357	389	293	309
Aldington	109	127	126	127
Ashwell	385	404	395	404
Askham Grange[1]	103	134	107	129
Aylesbury	239	296	236	241
Bedford	244	171	250	170
Belmarsh	374	360	760	841
Birmingham	993	575	959	567
Blantyre House	87	87	95	95
Blundeston	398	410	336	410
Brinsford	—	—	339	336
Bristol	394	379	415	374
Brixton	1,061	739	773	630
Brockhill	241	161	155	160
Bullingdon	—	—	386	635
Bullwood Hall[1]	95	119	104	126
Camp Hill	453	461	422	481
Canterbury	337	230	173	207
Cardiff	457	338	425	325
Castington	260	300	294	300
Channings Wood	579	594	570	594
Chelmsford	374	244	360	244
Coldingley	246	299	220	222
Cookham Wood[1]	119	120	117	120
Dartmoor	526	619	521	599
Deerbolt	354	404	383	422
Dorchester	208	152	200	139
Dover	220	347	265	312
Downview	276	286	283	286
Drake Hall[1]	189	262	186	261
Durham[1]	880	640	805	579
East Sutton Park[1]	75	84	87	90
Eastwood Park	89	134	86	134
Elmley	—	—	313	635
Erlestoke	212	218	206	218
Everthorpe	265	304	223	228

Establishment	Population 4 June 1991	Certified normal accommodation 4 June 1991	Population 4 June 1992	Certified normal accommodation 4 June 1992
Exeter	403	243	430	317
Featherstone	585	599	541	599
Feltham	781	874	734	874
Finnamore Wood	84	116	87	112
Ford	518	568	518	536
Frankland	421	432	327	332
Full sutton	424	634	463	624
Garth	503	512	456	512
Gartree	276	320	235	245
Glen Parva	736	854	687	854
Gloucester	254	200	169	107
Grendon	196	225	190	226
Guys Marsh	112	180	116	240
Haslar	103	105	109	110
Hatfield	151	180	175	180
Haverigg	331	351	322	351
Hewell Grange	109	136	137	136
Highpoint	773	824	717	747
Hindley	384	323	404	323
Hollesley Bay	305	569	307	569
Holloway[1]	504	517	461	517
Holme House	—	—	193	649
Hull	600	402	349	277
Huntercombe	159	166	211	225
Kingston	141	150	93	96
Kirkham	569	632	516	632
Kirklevington	75	106	—	—
Lancaster	239	186	257	186
Latchmere House	31	127	58	131
Leeds	960	627	938	591
Leicester	332	205	326	200
Lewes	431	230	373	301
Leyhill	409	410	403	410
Lincoln	578	391	606	389
Lindholme	752	800	723	800
Littlehey	527	593	530	543
Liverpool	1,158	931	1,192	931
Long Lartin	417	432	352	362
Low Newton[1]	229	167	305	199
Maidstone	515	549	511	517
Manchester	180	185	337	350
Moorland	—	—	627	620
Morton Hall	155	168	164	168
The Mount	305	484	386	484
New Hall*	101	122	146	122
North Sea Camp	187	202	201	204
Northallerton	186	146	192	148
Northeye	225	249	206	210
Norwich	467	495	466	421
Nottingham	221	218	204	218
Onley	419	520	409	460
Oxford	157	121	161	121
Parkhurst	220	239	225	286
Pentonville	811	754	791	756
Portland	465	527	421	439
Preston	492	408	426	331
Pucklechurch*	49	56	61	56
Ranby	334	363	345	347
Reading	253	184	114	184
Risley*	399	417	370	417
Rochester	313	306	256	306
Rudgate	292	300	289	300
Send	100	101	108	113
Shepton Mallet	241	175	193	158
Shrewsbury	293	176	251	168
Spring Hill	214	210	201	210
Stafford	742	606	733	657
Standford Hill	366	384	361	384
Stocken	394	396	387	396
Stoke Heath	276	360	281	300
Styal	170	258	201	189
Sudbury	506	523	453	523
Swaleside	498	504	496	504
Swansea	315	229	281	213
Swinfen Hall	178	182	170	172
Thorn Cross	204	300	208	300

Establishment	Population 4 June 1991	Certified normal accommodation 4 June 1991	Population 4 June 1992	Certified normal accommodation 4 June 1992
Thorp Arch	148	150	128	163
Usk	192	240	198	241
The Verne	590	600	564	580
Wakefield	652	753	621	638
Wandsworth	1,335	1,275	1,214	965
Wayland	572	580	580	580
Wellingborough	203	344	275	314
Werrington House	95	110	109	110
Wetherby	156	196	163	196
Whatton	162	161	201	204
Whitemoor	—	—	414	518
Winchester	564	530	481	458
Wormwood Scrubs	865	743	703	472
Wymott	766	816	755	768
The Wolds	—	—	113	320

[1] Establishment holding females.

Police (Absence from Duty)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will instruct chief constables to maintain separate records in respect of absences from duty of police officers due to *(a)* injury on duty and *(b)* other sickness.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) on 20 May, column *141*. Separate records are already maintained on absences from duty of police officers due to sickness as a result of assault on duty, and other sickness. The recent issue of guidance about the recording of data will ensure that more accurate information is collected.

Prevention of Terrorism

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by *(a)* year and *(b)* nationality for the last 10 years the number of people detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Acts.

Mr. Jack: Information on the number of people detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Acts in Great Britain is given in Home Office Statistical Bulletin 9/92 "Statistics on the operation of prevention of terrorism legislation—1992 first quarter". Table 1 contains annual information about detentions in connection with Northern Irish terrorism for the past ten years. The information for international terrorism is given in table 2 for the period since the introduction of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 on 22 March 1984. A copy of this bulletin is in the Library. Information on the nationality of those detained under the legislation could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Automatic Fingerprint Systems

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has held with the Data Protection Registrar with respect to the standardisation of automatic fingerprint systems *(a)* within the United Kingdom and *(b)* as part of the Trevi arrangements.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None. It is the responsibility of individual chief constables to register their local computer systems with the Data Protection Registrar. As for the national automatic fingerprint identification system being implemented by the Home Office, it is still too early in its development for useful discussions about it and its relationship to the Trevi arrangements to be held with the registrar.

Boundary Commissioners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the parliamentary boundary commissioners and assistant commissioners for the Yorkshire and Humberside area, giving their period of office, and appropriate qualifications.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Madam Speaker is chairman of the Commission. The other members are:

	Appointed by	Period of appointment
Mr. Justice Knox	Lord Chancellor	1.1.91—31.12.95[1]
Miss Sheila Cameron QC	The Home Secretary	3.3.89—31.12.92
Mr. David Macklin	The Secretary of State for the Environment	16.2.89—31.12.92

[1] Deputy Chairman. First appointed 1 January 1987.

The deputy chairman is required to be a High Court judge. No other formal qualifications are prescribed.

The Home Secretary has appointed the following assistant commissioners for the purpose of conducting local inquiries during the general review of constituencies currently being undertaken by the Commission:

Miss Caroline Alton
Michael Findlay Baker Esq, QC
George Robert Bartlett Esq, QC
Francis Martin Thomas Burkett Esq
John Anthony Bush Esq
James Charles Gibbs Esq
David Thomas Hallchurch Esq
Simon Tristram Hammond Esq
Michael Guy Vicat Harrison Esq, QC
Christopher Robert Jervis Esq
William Martin Kingston Esq
Brian Joseph Knight Esq, QC
Michael Edward Lewer Esq, QC
Humphrey John Lloyd Esq, QC
Donald Alexander McConville Esq
John Oliver Neligan Esq
David Price Esq
John Edward Anthony Samuels Esq, QC
Paul Anthony Spencer Esq
John Victor Williamson Esq

Additional assistant commissioners will be appointed in due course. Appointees are usually senior lawyers with extensive court experience, nominated by the Commission.

Commisioners and assistant commissioners are appointed to consider proposals for constituencies across the whole of England. Where practicable, local inquiries are conducted by assistant commissioners from a nearby area.

Vehicle Clamping

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received regarding the clamping operation being run by Nationwide Carpark Services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have been asked to reply.

I receive correspondence from time to time regarding the activities of wheelclamping companies on private land but have no record of receiving any representations concerning Nationwide Carpark Services. The issues concern the rights of private citizens on land off the highway. Unlike wheelclamping on-street, the activities of wheelclampers off-street are governed by common law, not by statute. We are keeping the matter under review.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Student Grants

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many full-time third level students *(a)* have had to withdraw from their course and *(b)* returned to their course after a period of absence due to illness, during the past five academic years.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Academic year	*Withdrawals due to illness*	*Returned to course*
1986-87	158	135
1987-88	162	136
1988-89	148	126
1989-90	148	117
1990-91	159	121
Totals	775	635

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what current financial provisions exist to support full-time third level students during periods of absence from their course, as a result of illness; and if he will introduce appropriate regulations to provide for such students who do not as a result receive education grant or other benefits.

Mr. Hanley: Students retain their entitlement to grant under the Students Awards Regulations for periods of illness lasting not more than 28 days. Students can also apply for a student loan if they are still meeting course attendance requirements. Assistance from access funds may also be obtained.

Income support and housing benefit are available throughout the year to prescribed groups of students, in particular, lone parents and disabled people. Any student who is ill for more than 28 weeks and has been submitting medical evidence can claim benefits available to disabled students.

There are no plans to change the current arrangements.

Vehicle Licensing Authority

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average length of time taken to process an application for *(a)* a driver's licence, cars, *(b)* an HGV licence, *(c)* a PSV licence, *(d)* a provisional driving licence and *(e)* a driving test.

Mr. Atkins: The average processing times are as follows:

—An ordinary driving licence (cars)—15 working days.
—An IGV (formerly known as HGV) licence—16 working days.
—A PCV (formerly known as PSV Bus) licence—16 working days.
—A taxi driver licence (initial)—43 working days.
(renewal)—6 working days.
—A provisional driver licence—15 working days.
—A driving test—43 working days.

Applications for LGV and PCV licences which have to be referred to the medical authorities or the police for further advice on average take twice as long.

Figures for taxi driver licences and driving tests were provided by the chief executive of the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average monthly number of *(a)* drivers licences, *(b)* HGV licences, *(c)* PSV licences, *(d)* provisional driving licences and *(e)* driving test applications processed by the Vehicle Licensing Authority in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is as follows (based on 1991-92 financial year):

	Number
Driver licences	6,900
LGV (formerly known as HGV) licences	910
PCV (formerly known as PSV Bus) licences	910
Taxi driver licences	123
Provisional driver licences	2,900
Driving test applications	4,175

Figures for taxi driver licences and driving test applications were provided by the chief executive of the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency.

Parole

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners were scheduled for parole in 1992; and of these how many have subsequently had their hearings postponed.

Mr. Mates: There is no system of parole for prisoners in Northern Ireland. However, there are schemes which allow for the temporary release of prisoners on compassionate grounds, summer and Christmas home leave for the longest serving prisoners, and pre-release leave.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners were scheduled to have their sentences reviewed by the Life Sentence Review Board in 1992; and how many of these have subsequently been informed that their reviews have been postponed.

Mr. Mates: A total of 80 indeterminate sentenced prisoners cases are scheduled for review by the Life

Sentence Review Board during 1992. Thirty seven of these have been reviewed to date, of these, the review board decided to defer 11 cases for further review.

Police Complaints

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will lay before Parliament the annual report of the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The report, which is the fourth annual report produced by the Commission since its inception in 1988, has been laid before Parliament today. It reflects the Commission's considerable efforts to maintain and build upon its relationship with both the public and the Police Service. It also continues the essential process of promoting wider understanding of what the Commission is required to do and how it does it by providing detailed and helpful explanations of a number of important aspects of its work. These include how the Commission supervises complaints against the police, its role in disciplinary proceedings following a complaint and the procedure by which relatively minor complaints are resolved informally. It makes clear that, as is right and proper, the police are accountable to the community they serve.

I am grateful to the Commission for all its work. I have no doubt that it will continue to contribute significantly to the enhancement of public confidence in the police. I know it will continue to apply its own high standards of objectivity and impartiality—thus ensuring that complaints against the police are thoroughly and fairly investigated. In doing so it will have my fullest support.

Rathfriland Ward

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any representations have been made, directly or indirectly, through the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference or otherwise, to Her Majesty's Government or the Boundary Commissioner by the Government of the Republic of Ireland concerning the proposal to transfer the ward of Rathfriland from Newry and Mourne district council to Banbridge district council.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* Responsibility for reviewing local government boundaries and wards rests entirely with the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner who is independent of Government. At the inter-governmental conference meeting in November 1991 both Governments took note of the Commissioner's independence in drawing up his recommendations. At no time during the current review have representations been made by either the United Kingdom or the Irish Government, directly or indirectly, to the Commissioner about the Rathfriland ward.

DEFENCE

Support Management Group

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much accommodation is required to house the support management group and related command units following his review, together with ancillary domestic accommodation for personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Some 19,200 sq m of office accommodation; and 1,760 sq m of workshop and hangar space. The estimated requirement for domestic accommodation is some 350 married quarters, and some 270 mess spaces. The requirement for domestic accommodation for support staffs would vary according to location chosen, and the eventual provision of domestic accommodation would depend on the individual circumstances of those involved.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the sites examined as potential accommodation for the relocation of the support management group with or without the related logistics command units, in the vicinity of Harrogate.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Harrogate itself; the MOD site at Pennypot; RAF Church Fenton; and RAF Linton on Ouse. The latter two sites were assessed as homes for technical support services, with and without the support management group.

Adjutant General's Headquarters

Dr. Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made with the relocation of the Adjutant General's headquarters.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A study is now being undertaken to examine the efficiency and cost effectiveness of forming an integrated Army personnel centre outside London. In addition to the headquarters of the Adjutant General and the military secretary, the review will encompass the manning and record offices, regimental pay offices and the Army pay office (officers accounts). The study team is expected to report by the end of the year: no decisions will be taken before the study has been completed and all concerned (including the trade unions) have been fully consulted.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

COCOM

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the future of COCOM.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 5 June at column *673*.

Antarctica

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Government's policy on the United Kingdom's abandoned bases in Antarctica.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government are fully committed to implementation of the environmental protocol to the Antarctic treaty.

The British Antarctic survey is already implementing fully the provisions of the protocol. It has undertaken a survey of all accessible abandoned United Kingdom bases in Antarctica. A programme either to remove the bases, or to retain some as emergency refuges or historic sites is in preparation.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to support the new international instrument negotiated for conservation of Antarctica.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government are fully committed to implementation of the environmental protocol to the Antarctic treaty.

Boat People

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what latest discussions he has had with the Government of Vietnam and the Governor of Hong Kong about the plight of the boat people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Most recently, I discussed the problem of Vietnamese migrants in Hong Kong and repatriation of non-refugees with the Vietnamese Foreign Minister, Nguyen Manh Cam, during his visit to London on 4 to 5 June. I also discussed this issue with the governor of Hong Kong during my visit to the territory from 25 to 29 May.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Vietnamese boat people remain in camps in Hong Kong; and what timescale is envisaged for their resettlement.

Mr. Goodlad: A total of 54,686 Vietnamese migrants were in the camps in Hong Kong on 4 June 1992. Those determined to be refugees will be resettled in third countries. Those who are not have no option but to return to Vietnam. At current rates of arrivals in Hong Kong and returns to Vietnam, it will take over three years to clear the camps.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many of the Vietnamese boat people have been resettled from Hong Kong *(a)* in individual countries and *(b)* in total.

Mr. Goodlad: Between 1979 and April 1992, a total of 129,607 Vietnamese boat people who were considered to be refugees were resettled from Hong Kong in the following countries:

	Number
Argentina	75
Australia	9,289
Austria	437
Belgium	196
Bermuda	7
Canada	24,872
China	37
Denmark	1,408
Finland	485
France	1,745
Germany	2,429
Greece	50
Hong Kong	554
Iceland	60
Ireland	110
Israel	38
Italy	112
Ivory Coast	1
Japan	554
Luxembourg	32
Netherlands	1,042
New Caledonia	80
New Zealand	877
Norway (direct)	486
Norway (via RPC[1])	547
Spain	251
Sweden	1,277
Switzerland	679
United Kingdom	14,296
USA (direct)	48,623
USA (via RPC[1])	15,754
Vanuatu	12
Others	50
In refugee transit centre at Bataan awaiting resettlement	3,142

[1] RPC = the refugee processing centre at Bataan.

Refuseniks

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Gersh Furman and his family of Kazan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have made various representations to the Russian authorities on behalf of Gersh Furman. In Moscow in March I raised human rights issues with the Russian first deputy Foreign Minister, including the case of Mr. Furman.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Pyotr Slutsky and his family of Primorsky Kray.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can consider raising with the Russian authorities the case of Pyotr Slutsky and his family, but to make effective representations we would need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Yakov Rovinsky and his family of Moscow.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can consider raising with the Russian authorities the case of Yakov Rovinsky and his family, but to make effective representations we would need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Igor Gopp and his family of St. Petersburg.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have made various representations to the Russian authorities on behalf of Igor Gopp. In Moscow in March I raised human rights issues with the Russian first deputy Foreign Minister, including the case of Mr. Gopp.

United Nations Centre for Transnational Corporations

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to make representations to the Secretary General of the United Nations for the restoration and strengthening of the United Nations centre for transnational corporations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We welcome the recent restructuring of the United Nations secretariat and the Secretary-General's efforts in this respect, which include

the establishment of the new Department of Transnational Corporations and Management. The expectation is that this will lead to an improved focus on priority issues, which are increasingly multi-disciplinary, and a better use of resources and co-ordination of work between the various parts of the secretariat.

EC President

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the period of office of the President of the EC Commission comes to an end; and if consideration has been given to extending this period beyond this date.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The period of office of the president of the EC Commission will end, along with that of the rest of the Commission, on 6 January 1993. A decision on the next Commission president is likely to be taken at the European Council in Lisbon on 26-27 June.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the United Nations sanctions against Serbia preclude the provision of emergency relief aid by humanitarian organisations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Foodstuffs and supplies intended strictly for medical purposes are exempt from the embargo imposed by United Nations Security Council resolution 757. Applications for the delivery of other humanitarian supplies will have to be considered by the Sanctions Committee established by SCR 724.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to secure the onward travel of the two vehicles owned by the charity Blythwood, which are being prevented by the German authorities from completing their journey to deliver blankets and bedding to the refugee centre in Belgrade.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A request has been put to the United Nations Sanctions Committee for permission to deliver the consignment to Belgrade.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Transport Office

Mr. Wilson: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission if he will outline the arrangements, including the period of franchise, under which Thomas Cook Ltd. provides the travel agency service within the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Beith: The present arrangements under which the Transport Office is operated on behalf of both Houses by Thomas Cook Ltd. date from an agreement concluded in August 1985. They are set out in detail in the third report from the Services Committee of Session 1984-85 (HC 437); but have been subsequently amended and extended by resolutions of the Services and Administration Committees.

Under the terms of the Services Committee's resolution of 15 May 1990 the 1985 agreement between the House and Thomas Cook Ltd. for the operation of the Transport Office was extended beyond its original four years for an indefinite period; but it was a recommendation of that Committee that these arrangements should be fully reviewed within 12 months of the beginning of this Parliament (HC 100-iv). It is expected that the Administration Committee will be invited to initiate that review as an early priority.

Thomas Cook Ltd. is required to report regularly to the Administration Committee and to the Transport Office consumers' panel whose chairman is a member of that Committee and which includes representatives of the Finance and Administration Department and the main user groups.

Full details of the services provided by the Transport Office are contained in the Booker's reference guide issued by Thomas Cook Ltd. to all Members and in the Members' handbook.

WALES

Hospital Incinerators

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the locations of hospital incinerators in Wales which have not been registered with the local authority.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: District health authorities in Wales have confirmed that applications for the authorisation of incineration processes have been submitted to local authorities for all incinerators currently in use.

Environmental Care

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to develop community-based primary environmental care programmes in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The environmental programme for Wales encompasses a wide range of policies and initiatives, including measures to support environmental improvement at the community level. Support for locally based action includes the Environment Wales initiative, which provides assistance to voluntary groups; the community revival strategy for the south Wales valleys; as well as funding for the activities of the Groundwork trusts in Wales.

Arsenic Contamination

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether his Department has investigated the levels of arsenic contamination in mining spoil used in concrete for house building in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No.

Aquatic Environment

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the responsibilities and duties of his Department and any agency which reports to his Department in relation to inshore waters, intertidal areas and maritime land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Government's memorandum on this subject which was

submitted to the Environment Committee of this House in the last Session. It has now been published by HMSO as part of the Environment Committee's report on Coastal Zone Protection and Planning Volume II, Minutes of Evidence and Appendices.

Swansea Canal Society

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assistance his Department is currently providing to the Swansea Canal Society; and what further assistance is under consideration.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Department is not currently providing or considering any assistance to the Swansea Canal Society.

Ramsar Sites

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to designate further Ramsar sites in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Department is currently processing two submissions for Ramsar site status, and the Countryside Council for Wales is considering further submissions.

Plantings

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hectares of non-native species and native broadleaf species have been planted in Wales in each year since 1984.

Mr. David Hunt: Information in this detail is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

National Trails

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to designate further national trails in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The responsibility for making proposals for designating long-distance routes in Wales rests with the Countryside Council for Wales, although these require my right hon. Friend's approval. There are no such proposals currently before the Department.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's arrangements for consulting the Data Protection Registrar during the planning stage of any initiative involving the collection, use or disclosure of personal data; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Officials are aware of the need to consult the registrar about proposed legislation or other initiatives which might affect or be affected by the Data Protection Act 1984, and will consult him as necessary when planning the collection, use or disclosure of automated personal data.

Environment Programme

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which organisations have received grants to date under the Environment Wales programme; and how much has been allocated in each instance.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is as follows:

Name of organisation	*Total value of grants awarded to each organisation* £
Association of Welsh Wildlife Trusts	16,000
Amelia Trust Farm	9,000
British Trust for Nature Conservation	21,333
Cardiff City Farm	5,110
Centre for Alternative Technology	15,000
Community Service Volunteers	21,333
Friends of the Earth	32,149
Friends of Forest Farm and the Glamorgan Canal	1,800
Groundwork Trusts	40,750
Keep Wales Tidy Campaign	31,333
National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardners	1,820
National Trust	5,000
North Wales Wildlife Trust	3,300
Offa's Dyke Association	2,385
Open Spaces Society	3,470
South Glamorgan Play Resource Centre	8,000
Prince of Wales Committee	60,000
Prince of Wales Committee—Environmental Education Group	16,536
Rambler's Association	8,320
Royal Society for Nature Conservation	21,333
Wales Wildlife and Countryside Link	12,480
Welsh Historic Gardena Trust	7,200
Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust	6,942

Special Protection Areas

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the designated special protection areas currently developed in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Previously designated areas are Skoholm and Skomer, the Dee Estuary and Grassholm. I have today announced the designation of four more sites: Glannau Aberdaron/Yns Enlli; Ynys Feurig/Cemlyn bay/the Skerries; Glannau Ynys Gybi and Traeth Lafan.

Conservation

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to designate new areas of heritage conservation and marine nature reserves in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Heritage coasts in Wales are defined by local authorities in consultation with the Countryside Council for Wales.

My right hon. Friend is responsible for designating marine nature reserves in Wales following an application from the Countryside Council for Wales. There are no such applications currently before the Department.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he hopes to announce his final proposals for local government reorganisation in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Later this year, in a White Paper.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he hopes to introduce legislation to give effect to his proposals for local government reorganisation in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Legislation will be introduced at the appropriate time, following publication of a White Paper.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he plans that elections will take place for the new shadow authorities consequent on local government reorganisation in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: In 1994.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he plans that the new authorities established as a consequence of his plans for local government reorganisation shall take over responsibilities from the present district and county authorities in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: On 1 April 1995.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average amount of time spent awaiting an initial assessment by a speech therapist in each health authority area in Wales; and what is the average amount spent per week in dealing with each patient.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not held centrally.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what efforts are currently being undertaken by his Department to encourage more applications for training places as speech therapists in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There is currently no shortage of applicants for the training in speech therapy provided in Wales.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much is currently allocated by his Department to each individual health authority area in Wales for the training of speech therapists; and what plans he has to increase the allocation.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office makes no specific allocation to health authorities for the purpose of training speech therapists. How much district health authorities choose to invest in speech therapy training services to meet the needs of their resident populations is a matter for determination in the light of local priorities and local circumstances.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Sports Grounds (Safety)

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects to publish the next edition of the "Guide to Safety of Sports Grounds", known as the green guide.

Mr. Mellor: I have no plans to publish a new edition of the "Guide to Safety of Sports Grounds".

Football Supporters Association

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to hold discussions with the Football Supporters Association; and whether the association's views have been taken into account when considering the implementation of the Taylor report.

Mr. Mellor: I have no specific plans at present to meet the Football Supporter's Association but would be willing to meet both it and the National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs. The views of both organisations have been sought on the review of all seating at Football League grounds which I announced on 4 June.

Aquatic Environment

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what are the responsibilities and duties of his Department and any agency which reports to his Department in relation to inshore waters, intertidal areas and maritime land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Member to the Government's memorandum on this subject which was submitted to the Environment Committee of this House in the last Session. It has now been published by HMSO as part of the Environment Committee's report on Coastal Zone Protection and Planning, Volume II, Minutes of Evidence and Appendices. Since the preparation of the memorandum the responsibilities of the Department of the Environment for the heritage, including the protection of historic wrecks, and those of the Department of Education for sport and recreation have transferred to the Department of National Heritage.

Works of Art

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he intends to proceed with the proposals to list works of art to prevent their export.

Mr. Mellor: I refer to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) on 5 June 1992 at columns *646-47*.

TRANSPORT

Bicyclists

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many bicyclists sustained serious head injuries in the United Kingdom in 1991, or the latest year for which statistics are available; what study he has made of the potential impact of a regulation requiring all bicyclists to wear crash helmets on this injury rate; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Provisional figures for 1991 indicate that 239 cyclists were reported killed and 3,939 seriously injured in road accidents in Great Britain. The standard report form does not provide information on the part of the body affected. However research by the Transport Research Laboratory suggests that 53 per cent. of cyclists reporting to a hospital had injuries to the head and that had helmets been worn some 11 per cent. of serious injuries would not have occurred whilst a further 18 per cent. would have been only slight injuries. The sales of helmets have increased in recent years, particularly for children following the Department's television campaign in 1991. We shall continue to encourage this trend but have no plans to introduce compulsion.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the parking of heavy goods vehicles in residential and other unsuitable areas; and what proposals he has to assist local authorities to deal with this problem.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I receive correspondence from time to time on this issue. Local authorities have a wide range of powers under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to control or prohibit lorry parking. These are described in detail in the Department's publication "Lorries in the Community", produced in 1990 in conjunction with the Civic Trust and the County Surveyors' Society, and in the accompanying manual of guidance issued to all local authorities. Parking arrangements for heavy goods vehicles may also be controlled by the traffic commissioners under operator licensing.

International Passenger Station, Kent

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the latest position as regards the provision of an international passenger station at Ashford, Kent.

Mr. Freeman: British rail has announced that it is soon to submit an application for planning permission for the central Ashford proposal for an international passenger station. I welcome this move, which will help allow early progress.

Shipping (Foreign Flags)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will assess the impact of the transfer of merchant shipping to foreign flags since 1979 on the balance of payments deficit.

Mr. Norris: For the calculation of the balance of payments, the sea transport account includes the international income and expenditure of all ships owned by United Kingdom residents, without reference to flag of registry. Thus the transfer of ships to foreign flags has no direct impact on the balance of payments.

Licences

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average length of time taken to process an application for *(a)* a driver's licence, cars, *(b)* an HGV licence, *(c)* a PSV licence, *(d)* a provisional driving licence and *(e)* a driving test.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The average length of time currently taken to process a full and provisional car driving licence is nine days and eight days for a lorry and bus licence. This includes three days taken to return the licence to the customer. Driving test applications currently take seven days in total.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average monthly number of *(a)* drivers licences, *(b)* HGV licences, *(c)* PSV licences, *(d)* provisional driving licences and *(e)* driving test applications processed by the Vehicle Licensing Authority in the most recent year for which figures are available for (i) England, (ii) Scotland and (iii) Wales.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Driving licence information is available only in a national figure. LGV and PCV figures are not available for the years prior to 1991-92. Over the last three years the monthly average number of driving licences processed was:

Year	*Provisional (Car)*	*Full (Car)*	*LGV*	*PCV*	*Total*
1989-90	94,465	447,538	—	—	542,003
1990-91	80,010	439,042	—	—	519,052
1991-92	76,990	453,176	35,086	7,186	572,438

Driving tests applications figures are available for England/Wales and Scotland.

Year	*England and Wales*	*Scotland*	*Total*
1989-90	165,223	15,136	180,359
1990-91	156,594	14,740	171,334
1991-92	137,373	13,627	151,000

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number of railway staff employed per million train kilometres for each of the EC member states, Sweden, Norway and Finland for each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* I have placed the information requested in the Library of the House and am writing to the hon. Member sending him a copy.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Marginal Tax Rates

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the numbers of (i) working heads, (ii) dependants and (iii) families with children facing marginal tax and benefit withdrawal rates in the manner of his answer to the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) of 23 January 1991, *Official Report*, column *249;* and if he will identify how many more families with children will face higher marginal tax rates as a result of the change in the hours rule from 24 to 16 per week for family credit.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is in the table. This is not directly comparable with previous answers, in that these related to the population of benefit recipients working 24 hours per week or more, whereas the current table adds in all those working 16 to 24 hours.

It is unlikely that any families with children will face higher deduction rates as a result of the change of hours rule. This is because those affected would have continued to receive income support if the rule had remained at 24 hours, and so would have faced marginal deduction rates of 100 per cent. (after taking into account the earnings disregard).

Combined marginal tax and benefit withdrawal rates, 1992-93 for benefit units in receipt of in-work income-related benefits where at least one partner works more than 15 hours a week. Great Britain (thousands)

Numbers facing combined rates of over 50 per cent.—in bands[1]			
Per cent.	*Families with children*	*Couples and single people*	*Total*
100	0	0	0
90 to 99	75	0	75
80 to 89	130	40	170
70 to 79	180	60	245
60 to 69	5	5	10
50 to 59	0	0	0

Notes:

[1] Figures are based on pooled Family Expenditure Survey Data, uprated 1992-93 prices, taxes and benefit levels.

Figures are rounded to the nearest 5,000.
Totals may not add due to rounding.
Analysis does not take into account Transitional Protection.
Figures do not take into account Disability Living Allowance and Disability Working Allowance.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's arrangements for consulting the Data Protection Registrar during the planning stage of any initiative involving the collection, use or disclosure of personal data; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Officials are aware of the need to consult the registrar about proposed legislation or other initiatives which might affect or be affected by the Data Protection Act 1984, and will consult him as necessary when planning the collection, use or disclosure of automated personal data.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will make a statement on the implications of the Danish referendum on the Maastricht treaty for the Barber protocol and the rights of occupational pensioners;

(2) if he will take steps to implement the Barber protocol before the remainder of the Maastricht treaty is ratified.

Miss Widdecombe: The protocol to article 119 of the treaty of Rome forms an integral part of the Maastricht agreement which has to be ratified as a whole.

ENVIRONMENT

Building Temperatures

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many prosecutions have been undertaken to date to enforce statutory instrument No. 1013 (1980) limiting temperatures in non-residential buildings to 19 deg C; and what proportion of these have ended in successful convictions.

Mr. Baldry: No prosecutions have been undertaken to date.

Council House Sales

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of properties sold by local authorities under the right-to-buy legislation in England in 1991; what was the average price paid after discount; and how many of these properties were flats.

Mr. Baldry: In 1991 about 51,900 dwellings were sold by local authorities in England under the right-to-buy legislation, approximately 13,900 of which were flats. The average price paid after discount for sitting-tenant sales, the vast majority of which are right-to-buy sales, is estimated to be £20,800 in 1991.

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing, for each region in England, the number of local authority homes sold under the right-to-buy legislation since its introduction and that figure as a percentage of the total number of properties owned by local authorities in the region.

Mr. Baldry: The available information is given in the table.

Region	*Right-to-buy sales to 31 December 1991*	*Sales as a percentage of stock*[1]
North (excluding Cumbria)	89,689	21·2
Yorkshire and Humberside	116,450	19·2
East Midlands	103,141	24·1
Eastern	127,198	22·8
London Boroughs	165,462	18·0
South East	129,319	22·7
South West	96,097	24·8
West Midlands	128,915	20·5
North West (including Cumbria)	126,922	17·1
England	1,083,193	20·6

[1] These percentages are based on estimates of stock at 1 April 1979, calculated by adding back sales since then to the latest estimate of stock, as at 1 April 1991.

Gravel Extraction

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date the public inquiry into the application by Aylett Gravel Company for gravel extraction on land at East Tilbury, Essex closed; on what date he received the inspector's report; on what date he published his decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is as follows:

Inquiry closed—21 December 1990.
Inspector's report received by the Secretary of State —6 November 1991.
Decision published—7 May 1992.

I cannot comment on individual applications but I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the inspector's report was considered very carefully before the Secretary of State made his decision.

Construction Industry

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the construction industry.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State keeps closely in touch with the construction industry and receives representations about it from time to time.

Air Pollution

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to improve the air quality at Tinsley, Sheffield, as measured by his air quality tests.

Mr. Maclean: The air quality measurements made at the Tinsley site suggest that motor traffic in the surrounding area is responsible for much of the oxides of nitrogen monitored there. From 31 December 1993, all new cars entering into service will have to comply with strict new European Community emission standards. This will result in a steady improvement in air quality at sites such as Tinsley.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue advice to residents of Tinsley, Sheffield, as to the health implications of the air quality tests conducted near to the M1 motorway.

Mr. Maclean: Advice on the health implications of air pollution episodes is available on a free telephone line (0800 556677) and from general practitioners. Daily air quality bulletins and forecasts are available on the same telephone line, on CEEFAX and in some newspapers.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the comparability of air quality measurements made at different types of sites.

Mr. Maclean: The comparability of air quality measurements of ozone and the oxides of nitrogen was examined for my Department by the photochemical oxidants review group in its first and second reports. Warren Spring laboratory has performed the same function for the smoke and sulphur dioxide surveys. The quality of urban air review group was asked in January to consider this issue for a wider range of urban pollutants.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria are used to determine the location at which checks for air quality are carried out.

Mr. Maclean: Air quality monitoring carried out on behalf of the Department of the Environment usually requires expensive instrumentation, operating over extended periods, so careful siting is imperative. The aim is to assess the general exposure of the public and the natural environment to a range of pollutants of policy concern. These considerations determine the general locality in which measurements are undertaken; specific locations are selected on the basis of access, cost and security.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to Sheffield city council to their representations about the equipment and procedures used by his Department to measure air quality; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) visited Sheffield last autumn and was pleased to see the comprehensive urban air pollution monitoring network which has been established there. The city council has been in correspondence with my Department about a number of issues concerning instrumentation, the choice of monitoring sites and the air quality bulletin system.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to review the policy in his Department's circular 2/87 for the award of costs to parties in appeals under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and other legislation.

Mr. Baldry: We have today issued a consultative draft DOE and Welsh Office circular about awards of costs in planning and other similar proceedings, which would replace DOE circulars 2/87 and 23/91 (Welsh Office circular 5/87 and 77/91). A copy of the draft circular has been placed in the parliamentary Libraries.

Noise Review

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is considering bringing forward legislative proposals to respond to recommendations made in the report of the noise review working party.

Mr. Baldry: My Department issued yesterday a public consultation document containing proposals which would extend the statutory nuisance procedures to include noise in the street; improve the control of loud speakers in the street; and provide adoptive powers for the local authorities to require the fitting of cut-out devices to burgler alarms. The consultation document also deals with some points of clarification in the existing statutory nuisance provisions in the Environmental Protection Act, 1990. Copies of this consultation paper have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Tenants Choice

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the regulation and administration of the tenants' choice scheme.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 9 June 1992]:* It is encouraging that two transfers of housing stock have now taken place under the tenants choice provisions of the Housing Act 1988, and a further five formal applications have been made to acquire property under these provisions. Implementation of the tenants choice scheme is the responsibility of the Housing Corporation and I have, therefore, asked the corporation to reply to the hon. Member direct with more information about the scheme.

Council Tax

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in assessing properties in the Easington district council area for the purpose of council tax.

Mr. Dorrell: I have been asked to reply.

Good progress is being made and the valuation banding work is on target for completion by the due date.

EDUCATION

Residential Care

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to set up a higher education centre to lead research in residential care.

Mr. Forman: None. The setting up of such a centre, and its funding, would be a matter for consideration by the research funding bodies and individual higher education institutions, in response to demand from potential users of the research.

School Leavers

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Education for Great Britain and for each region and for each year since 1980, separately, for male and female and for 16 and 17 year olds, how many school leavers have *(a)* stayed in full-time education, *(b)* joined a youth opportunities scheme or youth training scheme or *(c)* entered a job; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: The tables give details of the numbers of school leavers by age intending to *(a)* stay in full-time education other than school, *(b)* join YTS and *(c)* enter employment by individual regions in England since 1985. The year 1989-90 is the latest year for which the data are available.

The numbers going to youth training schemes have been collected separately only since 1988-89; prior to this the figures would have been included in the employment category.

Information prior to 1985 is not readily available in the format requested, that is, by age and region.

The figures for Wales and Scotland are the responsibilities of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Scotland respectively.

(a) Number of school leavers going to full-time education

Thousands

	North	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*North West*	*East Midlands*	*West Midlands*	*East Anglia*	*Greater London*	*Other South East*	*South West*	*Total England*
1989-90										
Aged 16										
Male	1·89	3·78	5·86	3·16	4·50	1·41	4·63	8·78	5·41	39·43
Female	3·82	5·59	8·70	5·47	7·44	2·34	6·27	13·59	8·05	61·27
Total	5·71	9·37	14·56	8·64	11·94	3·75	10·91	22·36	13·46	100·70
Aged 17										
Male	0·40	1·10	0·91	0·64	0·82	0·35	1·65	1·95	0·73	8·55
Female	0·36	1·02	1·06	0·69	0·98	0·34	1·66	2·42	0·96	9·49
Total	0·76	2·12	1·97	1·33	1·80	0·69	3·32	4·37	1·69	18·04
1988-89										
Aged 16										
Male	2·12	3·97	6·38	3·08	5·14	1·71	4·74	10·15	5·53	42·82
Female	3·24	6·39	9·29	5·06	7·75	3·13	6·59	15·60	6·85	63·91
Total	5·36	10·36	15·68	8·14	12·89	4·85	11·33	25·75	12·38	106·73
Aged 17										
Male	0·30	0·86	0·85	0·54	0·88	0·26	1·38	2·43	0·61	8·13
Female	0·49	0·90	0·99	0·55	1·01	0·18	1·95	2·72	0·95	9·73
Total	0·79	1·75	1·84	1·10	1·90	0·45	3·33	5·15	1·56	17·87
1987-88										
Aged 16										
Male	1·74	3·92	5·91	3·50	5·08	1·93	5·04	8·91	5·28	41·31
Female	3·16	5·05	8·83	5·13	7·93	3·41	6·74	14·97	7·95	63·18
Total	4·90	8·97	14·75	8·64	13·01	5·33	11·79	23·88	13·23	104·48
Aged 17										
Male	0·28	0·67	0·66	0·69	0·86	0·42	1·74	2·05	0·78	8·14
Female	0·42	1·07	0·95	0·66	1·03	0·49	2·29	2·27	0·93	10·11
Total	0·71	1·74	1·61	1·35	1·89	0·91	4·03	4·32	1·71	18·25
1986-87										
Aged 16										
Male	1·72	3·29	6·47	3·36	5·57	1·94	5·07	9·60	5·00	42·02
Female	3·51	5·13	10·42	5·66	7·84	2·93	6·76	15·35	8·24	65·83
Total	5·23	8·42	16·88	9·02	13·41	4·87	11·84	24·95	13·25	107·85
Aged 17										
Male	0·38	0·77	0·93	0·55	0·88	0·29	1·74	2·31	0·93	8·79
Female	0·60	1·03	0·83	0·74	1·05	0·39	2·45	2·91	1·15	11·16
Total	0·98	1·81	1·77	1·30	1·93	0·68	4·19	5·22	2·08	19·95
1985-86										
Aged 16										
Male	1·61	3·20	5·89	2·99	4·75	1·42	4·63	9·23	5·02	38·75

	North	Yorkshire and Humberside	North West	East Midlands	West Midlands	East Anglia	Greater London	Other South East	South West	Total England
Female	3·04	5·42	9·30	5·73	7·77	2·86	7·01	15·43	8·34	64·90
Total	4·65	8·62	15·20	8·72	12·52	4·27	11·64	24·67	13·36	103·66
Aged 17										
Male	0·27	0·75	1·01	0·65	0·99	0·40	2·10	2·18	1·08	9·43
Female	0·41	1·11	1·22	0·69	1·40	0·59	2·41	2·68	1·22	11·73
Total	0·68	1·85	2·23	1·35	2·39	0·99	4·50	4·87	2·30	21·16
1984-85										
Aged 16										
Male	1·44	2·86	5·92	3·36	4·91	1·47	4·08	8·54	5·07	37·66
Female	3·08	5·43	9·82	5·58	8·12	3·07	6·27	16·12	7·84	65·34
Total	4·53	8·29	15·74	8·94	13·04	4·55	10·35	24·66	12·90	103·00
Aged 17										
Male	0·26	0·65	0·80	0·49	1·02	0·39	2·11	2·23	0·85	8·78
Female	0·65	0·97	0·99	0·61	1·15	0·50	2·42	3·15	1·44	11·89
Total	0·90	1·62	1·78	1·10	2·17	0·89	4·54	5·38	2·29	20·67

(b) Number of school leavers entering YTS

Thousands

	North	Yorkshire and Humberside	North West	East Midlands	West Midlands	East Anglia	Greater London	Other South East	South West	Total England
1989-90										
Aged 16										
Male	5·30	5·19	6·10	3·42	5·30	0·97	0·83	2·25	2·97	32·33
Female	3·79	3·44	4·88	2·43	4·94	0·85	0·63	2·08	2·26	25·30
Total	9·09	8·63	10·98	5·84	10·24	1·82	1·46	4·33	5·23	57·63
Aged 17										
Male	0·16	0·19	0·18	0·11	0·15	0·04	0·07	0·15	0·13	1·18
Female	0·23	0·24	0·29	0·08	0·20	0·04	0·14	0·15	0·06	1·42
Total	0·39	0·42	0·46	0·19	0·35	0·08	0·21	0·31	0·18	2·60
1988-89										
Aged 16										
Male	5·94	7·61	7·85	5·25	6·88	1·78	0·92	4·26	4·89	45·38
Female	4·86	5·65	6·55	3·92	6·88	1·33	0·79	3·55	3·79	37·31
Total	10·80	13·26	14·40	9·18	13·76	3·11	1·71	7·81	8·68	82·69
Aged 17										
Male	0·15	0·44	0·41	0·18	0·34	0·03	0·10	0·35	0·22	2·23
Female	0·38	0·31	0·52	0·18	0·45	0·03	0·17	0·33	0·14	2·50
Total	0·53	0·75	0·94	0·35	0·79	0·05	0·27	0·68	0·37	4·73

Prior to 1988-89 school leavers entering YTS were included in Employment category.

(c) Number of school leavers entering employment

Thousands

	North	Yorkshire and Humberside	North West	East Midlands	West Midlands	East Anglia	Greater London	Other South East	South West	Total England
1989-90										
Aged 16										
Male	3·85	7·98	10·44	6·65	9·00	3·99	7·92	18·53	7·07	75·44
Female	2·18	5·04	6·11	4·43	5·74	2·46	5·91	12·30	4·59	48·76
Total	6·03	13·01	16·55	11·09	14·74	6·45	13·82	30·84	11·66	124·19
Aged 17										
Male	0·80	1·54	1·87	1·02	1·32	0·39	2·42	3·67	1·10	14·12
Female	0·71	1·51	1·70	0·93	1·37	0·52	2·40	4·30	1·05	14·50
Total	1·51	3·05	3·57	1·94	2·69	0·92	4·82	7·97	2·15	28·62
1988-89										
Aged 16										
Male	2·90	6·72	8·95	5·56	8·51	4·01	7·91	18·36	7·19	70·10
Female	1·56	4·54	5·46	3·45	4·62	2·42	6·49	12·27	4·42	45·23

	North	Yorkshire and Humberside	North West	East Midlands	West Midlands	East Anglia	Greater London	Other South East	South West	Total England
Total	4·46	11·26	14·41	9·01	13·13	6·43	14·40	30·63	11·60	115·33
Aged 17										
Male	0·75	1·25	1·35	1·06	1·42	0·65	2·29	4·52	1·18	14·46
Female	0·77	1·58	1·36	1·19	1·24	0·87	2·69	4·52	1·13	15·35
Total	1·52	2·83	2·71	2·225	2·66	1·52	4·98	9·03	2·31	29·81
1987-88										
Aged 16										
Male	12·06	19·34	22·43	14·75	19·66	6·97	12·49	29·28	15·59	152·56
Female	9·81	14·97	17·98	10·96	15·18	5·31	10·04	22·58	11·33	118·17
Total	21·88	34·31	40·41	25·71	34·84	12·28	22·53	51·86	26·92	270·74
Aged 17										
Male	1·02	1·93	1·85	1·46	1·58	0·78	3·39	6·11	1·67	19·80
Female	1·26	1·88	2·25	1·41	1·79	0·90	4·13	6·04	1·38	21·02
Total	2·28	3·81	4·10	2·87	3·37	1·68	7·52	12·15	3·05	40·82
1986-87										
Aged 16										
Male	14·34	22·72	27·34	16·62	21·90	7·04	15·35	34·05	16·38	175·74
Female	11·44	18·61	21·22	13·09	17·64	5·81	12·51	27·27	12·60	140·18
Total	25·78	41·33	48·57	29·71	39·54	12·84	27·86	61·32	28·99	315·93
Aged 17										
Male	1·23	2·33	2·14	1·58	2·02	0·91	3·76	6·69	2·02	22·66
Female	1·02	2·67	2·60	1·66	2·08	0·94	4·17	6·69	2·16	23·99
Total	2·25	5·00	4·74	3·24	4·10	1·84	7·93	13·37	4·18	46·65
1985-86										
Aged 16										
Male	14·52	22·34	27·26	16·83	23·50	7·79	16·07	34·34	16·03	178·67
Female	12·00	18·34	21·79	12·96	19·06	6·20	12·51	26·43	12·61	141·90
Total	26·52	40·68	49·05	29·79	42·55	13·99	28·58	60·77	28·64	320·57
Aged 17										
Male	1·20	2·69	2·49	1·71	2·37	1·03	4·28	6·84	1·83	24·43
Female	1·69	2·91	2·72	1·96	2·11	1·10	5·16	7·12	2·19	26·95
Total	2·89	5·60	5·20	3·66	4·48	2·13	9·44	13·96	4·02	51·38
1984-85										
Aged 16										
Male	15·10	23·10	28·21	16·93	24·19	7·98	17·14	35·87	17·07	185·57
Female	12·19	18·71	22·33	13·88	18·73	6·00	13·46	26·91	13·30	145·52
Total	27·29	41·81	50·54	30·81	42·92	13·98	30·60	62·77	30·37	331·10
Aged 17										
Male	1·47	2·56	2·33	1·87	2·15	0·90	4·63	6·53	1·89	24·32
Female	1·60	2·93	2·67	2·07	2·19	0·99	5·66	7·07	2·10	27·28
Total	3·07	5·49	5·00	3·94	4·34	1·88	10·29	13·59	3·99	51·60

Hearing-impaired Pupils

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to introduce regulations to require all teachers working with hearing-impaired pupils to obtain the additional qualification of teacher of the deaf.

Mr. Forth: Regulation 15 of the Education (Teachers) Regulations 1989 requires teachers of a class of pupils who are hearing impaired—but not including teachers of a craft, trade or domestic subject—to possess a qualification approved by my right hon. Friend.

The policy objective behind these regulations is to ensure a minimum standard of teaching expertise in handling such a class. There are no plans to extend the scope of the regulations.

PRIME MINISTER

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's arrangements for consulting the Data Protection Registrar during the planning stage of any initiative involving the collection, use or disclosure of personal data; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

When planning any project involving information technology, the standing instructions include a specific action to consider the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1984. In any case of doubt, the Data Protection Registrar is consulted. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is satisfied with the effectiveness of these arrangements.

International Parliamentary Assemblies

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Prime Minister what is his policy on the appointment of non-elected persons to the United Kingdom delegations to those international parliamentary assemblies for which he makes appointments.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

Any appointments my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister makes to United Kingdom delegations to international parliamentary assemblies are made in accordance with the rules of the assembly concerned.

Energy Tax

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government intend to support the EC energy tax proposal.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

The Government will examine the European Commission's recent draft directive on a carbon/energy tax carefully, taking account of the outcome of the Rio summit, and the actions taken by other major countries to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

Brazil

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Prime Minister if he will discuss with the authorities in Brazil what bilateral action can be taken to provide for the *(a)* housing requirements, *(b)* education requirements and *(c)* medical requirements of street children in Brazil; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* I have been asked to reply.

We provide assistance under the ODA joint funding scheme to programmes for street children and other groups carried out in Brazil by non-governmental organisations. We are open to requests for external professional advice under our bilateral technical co-operation programme to Brazil.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Prime Minister if he will discuss with the authorities in Brazil what bilateral action can be taken to *(a)* tackle the plight of street children and *(b)* bring to justice their killers.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister plans to raise the matter during his visit. While it is for the Brazilian authorities to take measures to resolve the problem, we are doing what we can to alleviate the plight of street children by assisting the non-governmental organisations which work with them.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he intends to make about the plight of assassinated street children in Brazil, during his visit to Rio de Janeiro; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* I have been asked to reply.

The Government share the hon. Member's concern. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister plans to raise the matter in Rio de Janeiro.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Services Ombudsman

Mr. Mills: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, when the legal services ombudsman intends to publish his annual report.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The legal services ombudsman has today published his first annual report, and copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Statistics

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish his proposals to replace the trade statistics source provided by the single administrative document.

Sir John Cope: With the completion of the single market on 1 January 1993, single administrative documents will no longer be required for trade within the European Community. Trade statistics will be collected through the new Intrastat system which is provided for in EC Council regulation 3330/91, published in *Official Journal* L316/1 dated 16 November 1991. This is a framework regulation which leaves many points of detail to implementing regulations which have not yet been finalised. Customs have kept traders in the United Kingdom informed of progress on a regular basis and will issue a public notice in September.

Statistics on trade in goods with non-EC countries will continue to be collected from single administrative documents.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish his proposals to introduce criminal penalties for failure to make statistical returns or discrepancies under the Intrastat regulations; and if he will detail those business organisations he has consulted on these proposals and indicate their concerns.

Sir John Cope: Customs has consulted the Institute of Directors and the Confederation of British Industry regarding proposals to introduce legislation. Concerns were expressed both about the nature of the proposed regime and the possibility of penalising innocent errors. These concerns are being taken into account in drawing up legislation analogous to the Statistics of Trade Act 1947. The legislation will be introduced as a regulation, made under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972, to be laid before Parliament this summer.

VAT

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the special provisions to apply to the sale of new boats, aircraft and motor vehicles for intra-Community trade VAT returns from 1 January 1993.

Sir John Cope: Intra-Community supplies of goods which qualify as new means of transport will always be subject to VAT in the EC member state of destination. United Kingdom VAT-registered sellers of such goods will therefore not account in their VAT returns for the VAT due on those which are removed to other member states. However, people who acquire new means of transport in the United Kingdom from suppliers in other member states will either account for VAT in their VAT return or pay VAT directly to Customs and Excise depending on whether they are registered.

Drug Imports

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list by year for the last five years and the current year to date the value of counterfeit medicines being imported into the United Kingdom that have been discovered by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: There have been no importations of counterfeit medicines discovered by Customs and Excise in the past five years.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to the use of fiscal instruments to encourage energy efficiency investment.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) on 4 June 1992 at column *634*.

Overseas Investment

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much money from the United Kingdom is invested abroad; and what is the level of income generated as a result.

Mr. Nelson: The latest estimates of levels of overseas assets held by United Kingdom residents are contained in table 8.1 of the annual Pink Book 1991 "UK Balance of Payments", published by the CSO. Estimates of interest, profits and dividends received by United Kingdom residents from overseas assets are contained in table D of the quarterly balance of payments press notice, CSO(92)35. Copies of these publications are in the Library.

Global Environment Facility

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action is being undertaken by his Department to ensure that Third world Governments are fully represented in the decision-making of the global environment facility.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply. The Minister for Overseas Development is responsible for the global environment facility. The United Kingdom has pressed for global environment facility to evolve to ensure full and effective representation by developing countries. The GEF participants meeting on 29-30 April agreed that membership of the GEF should be open to all countries and that it would fund programmes and projects, with agreed global environmental benefits, which are country driven and are consistent with developing countries' national priorities.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Development Grants

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of grants paid by the Overseas Development Administration to non-governmental organisations working on overseas development projects.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1992-93 the Overseas Development Administration has allocated £47 million to United Kingdom non-governmental organisations working on overseas development projects. Of this figure, £28 million is earmarked for the joint funding scheme, £17·8 million is allocated to the volunteer programme and £1·2 million is provided in miscellaneous grants to non-governmental organisations. This excludes funds for disaster and refugee relief, food-aid and for projects which NGOs are implementing on our behalf.

Cash Flows

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being undertaken by the Overseas Development Administration to explore ways of limiting cash flows from lower to upper income countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Cash flows from lower to upper income countries can be limited through debt relief and through pursuance of policies by lower income countries which attract investment and discourage capital flight.

The Government have consistently taken the lead in promoting debt relief measures for the poorest countries. Agreement to begin implementing the Prime Minister's Trinidad terms initiative to relieve the burden of debt on these countries was achieved in December 1991. Five countries have already benefited from the terms, and we expect more to do so over the coming months. As these new arrangements take effect, we can expect a significant reduction in repayments due to Government creditors. In addition, the ODA has relieved developing countries of around £1,000 million of old aid loans since 1980.

The United Kingdom has supported and provided its share of the finances needed to implement a 1989 agreement, known as the Brady plan, to help deal with the problems of a commercial bank debt. Under the Brady plan, the IMF and World bank set aside a part of their existing lending to indebted countries to support commercial debt reduction operations. They do this by financing debt buy-backs at a discount, or by providing collateral for reduced principal or interest payments. We are now seeing the fruits of this agreement and arrangements to cancel substantial proportions of commercial bank debt have been agreed, or are likely to be agreed soon, with most of the largest debtors.

The pursuit of policies aimed at sustained economic growth is fundamental to overcoming the problem of outward financial flows. One of the main aims of our aid programme is to help developing countries do this as effectively as possible. Recent experience in Latin America shows that determined adjustment and policy reform

efforts can quickly attract considerable amounts of foreign direct investment. There has been progress also, particularly in Mexico and Chile, regarding the effective mobilisation of domestic resources, including substantial return of flight capital.

Commodity Prices

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being undertaken by the Overseas Development Administration to support and stabilise commodity prices in lower income countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We participate as part of the European Community in Stabex and Sysmin, schemes under the Lomé convention for compensating African, Caribbean and Pacific countries for loss of commodity export earnings. We also participate in a number of international commodity agreements, the purpose of which is to assist the flow of commodity trade between producer and consumer countries. The overall trend of prices is of course determined by the state of global supply and demand for individual commodities.

Air Pollution

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is currently granted by the Overseas Development Administration to help lower income signatory countries to implement action under *(a)* the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer and *(b)* the Geneva convention on long range transboundary air pollution.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: On *(a)* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 9 June.

On *(b)*, the Government contribute about 5 per cent. to the United Nations budget which funds the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe which administers the long-range transboundary air pollution convention. In addition, the United Kingdom contributed about £63,000 direct to the convention trust fund in 1991. The United Kingdom also supports a number of research activities under the convention amounting to about £370,000 per annum.

Drainage Basins

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts are being made by the Overseas Development Administration to encourage the use of drainage basins as units for land and water management; and what support is granted towards the evaluation of the economic value of each basin's ecosystem.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We recognise the importance of drainage basins as units for land and water management. Research on catchment protection is a component of the ODA's renewable natural resources research strategy. The importance of catchments is also recognised in the ODA "Manual of Environmental Appraisal". The 1990-91 annual report on the RNRR strategy and the revised and updated "Manual of Environmental Appraisal" have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

While no specific work has been undertaken by ODA on the economic value of drainage basin ecosystems, the ODA commissioned work by the Overseas Development Institute, published in June 1991 as a book "Values for the Environment: A guide to Economic Appraisal" by J. T. Winpenny, which provides guidance on quantifying environmental costs and benefits of development projects. Copies of this book have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Development Programmes

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being undertaken by the Overseas Development Administration to improve planning integration of technical co-operation within overall and sectoral development programmes of recipient countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Technical co-operation, which comprises mainly the provision of British expertise overseas and the provision of training in the United Kingdom, is made available as an integral element of aid to projects, sector programmes and broader national development efforts. Effective integration of all forms of aid, including technical co-operation, from all donors is also sought by means of multi-donor co-ordination meetings with the authorities of individual recipient countries.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bass

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with his French counterpart about the conservation of bass stocks.

Mr. Curry: No specific discussions have been recently held with the French. However when the EC minimum landing size for bass, introduced in 1990, was being negotiated, the Government discussed the issue with other member states as well as with the European Commission.

I am willing to take up any issue concerning fisheries conservation with any opposite numbers when there is clear evidence of cause for concern.

Under-sized Fish

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with his French counterpart about the landing and sale of under-sized fish at channel ports and towns.

Mr. Curry: I raised this issue when we met earlier this month, and at the Council in Luxembourg on 9 June, when improving enforcement was a major item of discussion.

Fisheries Council

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Fisheries Council held in Luxembourg on 9 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I attended the Council of Fisheries Ministers in Luxembourg on 9 June 1992 together with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office.

The Council continued its consideration of the mid-term review of the common fisheries policy. The

Commission will now be preparing proposals for consideration during the next four months to implement improvements to the policy on better enforcement, measures to reduce discards and the development of fisheries management in the Mediterranean.

The Council accepted the need for improved enforcement by member states, and at the EC level, and asked the Commission to make urgent proposals for strengthening the powers of the Community inspectorate. The Council also recognised the importance and complexity of the problem of discards and asked the Commission to press ahead with the examination of ways of reducing them.

I urged the Council to follow the United Kingdom lead in introducing a one-net rule and announced that to achieve stronger co-operation between the national control authorities we have arranged a meeting for the principals of these authorities to take place in the United Kingdom during our presidency.

The Commission undertook to study the position of sole and whiting in the North sea, the southern North sea fishery and the application of a one-net rule in Community waters.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Industrial Policy

15. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he next intends to meet representatives of the European Commission to discuss industrial policy.

Mr. Sainsbury: I will attend the meeting of the Industry Council on 17 June at which representatives of the European Commission will be present.

33. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will next meet representatives of the Yorkshire and Humberside regional CBI to discuss industrial policy.

Mr. Heseltine: I have no meetings planned with the Yorkshire and Humberside regional CBI in the immediate future.

34. **Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will next meet representatives of the south-east regional CBI to discuss industrial policy.

Mr. Heseltine: I have no meetings planned with the CBI's south-east regional council in the immediate future.

Coal Privatisation

22. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with British Coal regarding the privatisation of the industry.

Mr. Eggar: I meet the chairman of British Coal on regular occasions and discuss a variety of issues.

23. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to publish his proposals for the privatisation of the mining industry.

Mr. Eggar: No decision has yet been taken on the form or timing of the Government's policy announcement on coal privatisation.

Privatisations (Competition)

24. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has any plans to increase competition in industries which have been privatised.

Mr. Heseltine: The Government are committed to promoting competition throughout the economy. The telecommunications market is already open, and plans have been announced to increase the scope for competition in the markets for gas, electricity and water services.

Textile Industry

25. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from the textile industry in relation to the GATT talks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: I and my officials are in regular contact with the textiles and clothing industry. We share its view that its best interests will be served by an early and successful conclusion to all aspects of the GATT Uruguay round, including the phase-out of the multi-fibre arrangement linked with strengthened rules and disciplines over international trading practices.

Regional Policy

26. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his Department's plans for regional policy.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government remain committed to an effective, well-focused regional policy. I announced to the House yesterday a review of the United Kingdom assisted areas map.

Shark Products

27. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to ban the import of all shark products.

Mr. Needham: No. Sharks are not currently recognised as being endangered. If evidence were produced that any species of shark was becoming endangered, consideration could be given to controlling the trade under either the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) or the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976.

Shipbuilding

28. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will make a statement on the state of the glass-reinforced plastic ship building industry in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: Two United Kingdom yards have the capability of building glass-reinforced plastic ships. One yard put its facility on a care and maintenance basis in 1984.

Due to reduced demand, the other yard is actively pursuing warship export orders and greater diversification into commercial activities.

Manufacturing Output

29. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to boost manufacturing output.

Mr. Sainsbury: Our policies of reducing barriers to trade and enterprise will help British companies.

Cars

30. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on United Kingdom car production and new car sales.

Mr. Sainsbury: A total of 138,106 cars were sold in the United Kingdom in April, 9 per cent. more than in the same month last year. This is the first time since October 1989 that new car sales have been higher than the comparable month in the previous year, and clearly indicates that the market is recovering.

Colliery Manpower

31. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Coal concerning future levels of colliery manpower after the expiry of the long-term bulk coal purchase contracts with National Power and PowerGen in April 1993.

Mr. Eggar: I look forward to continuing to meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Trade and Industrial Activity

32. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with the Confederation of British Industry on matters relating to trade and industry activity.

Mr. Heseltine: I met representatives of the CBI and its National Manufacturing Council on 29 April and at the CBI annual dinner on 19 May. On both occasions we had a wide-ranging discussion on trade and industry matters.

Gas Turbine Generating Stations

35. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the number of applications before his Department for the construction of new combined-cycle gas turbine generating stations.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend is currently considering 12 applications for his consent under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 to construct new combined-cycle gas turbine generating stations.

Traditional Industries

36. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will take steps to assist traditional industries in Leicester.

Mr. Sainsbury: The DTI already has in place a number of schemes that are helping companies in Leicester and elsewhere.

Consumer Credit

37. **Mr. Merchant:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress has been made with his Department's consumer credit marketing proposals.

Mr. Leigh: The responses to the recent consultation have been examined and a number of possible modifications to the draft regulations are being considered.

Coal Imports

4. **Mr. Stevenson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he next proposes to meet the chairman of British Coal concerning the future level of coal imports.

Mr. Eggar: I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has for ensuring that economic under-achievement criteria other than the present Department of Employment count or percentage unemployment rate are taken into account in reviewing assisted area status; and if he will list other appropriate criteria and the weight to be given to them.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the promised review of the assisted areas map will begin; and what criteria will be applied to judge each area's status.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Gentlemen to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on 9 June, at the column *127*.

Toxic Shock Syndrome

Ms. Richardson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will take steps to require manufacturers of tampons to publicise a warning about toxic shock syndrome on the outside of packets.

Mr. Leigh: I have no plans to require manufacturers to put a warning about toxic shock syndrome on the outside of the packet. At the request of Government, manufacturers of tampons have improved the warning label on the outside of the packet and advise women to read and retain the leaflet on safety included in the packet. The leaflet warns the user about the risk of toxic shock syndrome, describes the symptoms and advises her to consult a doctor if they occur.

Fabric Safety

Mr. Fraser: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what investigations his Department has made into the safety of the fabric known as ramie.

Mr. Leigh: Ramie is a natural fibre that has long been used in clothing fabrics. If it is used to give a fluffy effect to the surface of the fabric, loose fibres can catch fire. However, the flammability of a garment can be reduced when other fibres are introduced.

My Department will be holding an early meeting with major clothing retailers to discuss what might be done about the marketing of potentially unsafe fashionwear.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many incidents of garments containing ramie catching fire have occurred in the past 18 months.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* Available statistics on clothing fires do not give information on the fibre content of the garments involved.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to introduce safety standards for flammable materials in garments.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* My Department has commissioned an initial research project into the burning behaviour of fabrics, particularly those used in lightwear garments. This work will be presented to the British Standards Institution as a basis for the preparation of appropriate safety standards.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the plans he has to make progress on the draft directive on data protection and telecommunications in the period 1 July to 31 December; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: The Commission is at present considering its proposals in the light of the European Parliament's opinion, which was adopted on 13 March. The possibilities for progress on the directive will be considered once the Commission has submitted its revised proposal to the Council.

Maxwell Pensions

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if investigators from his Department will contact Dr. Werner Keicher in connection with the recovery of monies due to the Maxwell pension funds and their trustee companies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: As my hon. Friend will now know, on 8 June the President of the Board of Trade announced that he had appointed Mr. J. L. Thomas QC and Mr. R. T. Turner FCA as inspectors under section 432(2) and 442 of the Companies Act 1985 to investigate and report on the affairs and membership of Mirror Group Newspapers plc. The inspectors have been asked to look in particular at the offers for sale of the company's shares in early 1991. How inspectors conduct their inquiry and whom they contact is a matter for them.

AAH Holdings plc

Mr. Gapes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when his interim order under section 74 of the Fair Trading Act 1973 concerning AAH Holdings plc is due to expire; and whether he will extend the order.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Merger Situation (Medicopharma NV and AAH Holdings plc) (Interim Provision) Order 1992, which was made under section 89 of the Fair Trading Act 1973 on 7 May 1992, revoked the Merger Reference (Medicopharma NV and AAH Holdings plc) Order 1991 and the Merger Reference (Medicopharma NV and AAH Holdings plc) (Amendment) Order 1991, which had been made under section 74 of the Act. The effect of these earlier orders, limited to the Grampian and Highland regions, is reproduced in the new order. This new order has no expiry date.

Inward Investment

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) when he expects information about inward investment into the United Kingdom for 1991 to be made available;

(2) what was the regional breakdown of inward investment into the United Kingdom in 1990;

(3) what estimate he has made of the number of jobs safeguarded or created by inward investment in 1990;

(4) how many inward investment projects were begun in the United Kingdom in 1990, 1989 and 1988.

Mr. Sainsbury: Information about inward investment into the United Kingdom for the financial year 1991-92 has yet to be finalised and will be announced in my Department's Invest in Britain bureau's annual report.

A regional breakdown showing the number of projects notified to the IBB and the number of jobs created and safeguarded for the period 1 January 1990 to 31 March 1991 is in the table, together with the same information for the calendar years 1988 and 1989.

The decisions recorded include the establishment of new business, expansion or acquisition of an existing business and involvement in a joint venture. These figures are based on information provided by the companies themselves at the time of the investment and take no account of subsequent developments.

Region	*Number of projects*	*New jobs*	*Safeguarded jobs*	*Total jobs*
1990-91				
Scotland	41	9,799	798	10,595
Wales	70	2,636	7,166	9,802
Northern Ireland	23	1,248	2,186	3,434
North East	44	2,714	2,972	5,686
North West	53	1,810	8,697	10,507
Yorkshire and Humberside	26	2,464	2,091	4,555
East Midlands	15	820	1,572	2,392
West Midlands	73	4,410	6,815	11,225
East	3	135	700	835
South East	4	475	25	500
South West	3	580	0	580
Other	1	0	2,300	2,300
Total	356	27,181	35,230	62,411
1989				
Scotland	34	4,551	645	5,198
Wales	42	3,564	2,050	5,614
Northern Ireland	17	1,187	8,558	9,745
North East	46	4,495	1,438	5,933
North West	52	2,646	4,538	7,184
Yorkshire and Humberside	11	600	1,100	1,700

Region	Number of projects	New jobs	Safeguarded jobs	Total jobs
East Midlands	11	4,073	2,420	6,493
West Midlands	87	5,629	7,035	12,664
East	2	0	0	0
South East	21	2,163	610	2,773
South West	8	1,848	40	1,888
Other	0	0	0	0
Total	331	30,756	28,434	59,190
1988				
Scotland	58	5,429	1,978	7,407
Wales	56	6,006	2,085	8,091
Northern Ireland	22	2,610	916	3,526
North East	22	2,041	31	2,072
North West	30	1,763	3,844	5,607
Yorkshire and Humberside	23	1,790	380	2,170
East Midlands	18	1,139	880	2,019
West Midlands	69	3,671	7,840	11,511
East	0	0	0	0
South East	46	2,400	983	3,383
South West	5	479	0	479
Other	3	325	0	325
Total	352	27,653	18,937	46,590

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much inward investment there was from the rest of the world into each EC member state in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information is as follows:

Direct investment into EC member states 1989

	£ million
Belgium-Luxembourg	4,304
Denmark[1]	5
France	6,274
Germany	4,001
Greece	459
Ireland	52
Italy	1,548
Netherlands	3,620
Portugal	989
Spain	5,140
United Kingdom	19,629

[1] 1984 latest available data.
Source: IMF Balance of Payments Statistics.

Telecommunications

Mr. Congdon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which operators will be required to comply with the telecommunications provisions of the Competition and Service (Utilities) Act 1992.

Mr. Leigh: The Competition and Service (Utilities) Act 1992 will apply only to those telecommunication operators which have been designated under the provisions of section 10. The power to designate can be exercised only if the President is satisfied that the operator provides at least 25 per cent. of the voice telephony services supplied within the area in relation to which he is a public telecommunications operator. Only BT and Kingston Communications (Hull) plc meet that criterion and I have signed an order today so designating them.

South Africa (Oil)

Mr. Congdon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if exports of crude oil from the United Kingdom continental shelf will be permited to South Africa following the EC's decision to lift its embargo; and whether United Kingdom companies can now ship oil of other origin to South Africa.

Mr. Eggar: Following the decision taken by EC Ministers on 6 April 1992 to lift the EC embargo on oil movements to South Africa there are no restrictions imposed by the Government on United Kingdom companies exporting oil to South Africa either from the United Kingdom continental shelf or elsewhere.

Staff Salaries

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on the cause of the corruption that occurred to hon. Members' staff salaries for the month of May.

Mr. Newton: The corruption of the Members' staff computer payroll records for the month of May was a direct result of operator procedural error at a time of extreme pressure. It did not originate from a computer virus nor from unauthorised access to the computer system or records held in the Fees Office.

I am assured that all possible steps are being taken to prevent a repetition of the error.

SCOTLAND

Hardy Nursery Stock

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the development of the hardy nursery stock industry in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: The Scottish Office agriculture and fisheries department provides general encouragement for the hardy nursery stock industry in Scotland which is demonstrating steady and welcome development as regards range and quality of products and market expansion.

Population Statistics

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the population of *(a)* Orkney, *(b)* Shetland, *(c)* Islay, *(d)* Jura, *(e)* Colonsay and *(f)* Mull; how many people are considered to be economically active on each of these islands.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Figures from the 1991 census of population are not yet available. The most recent figures are from the 1981 census and are given in the table.

Area	*Residents*	*Residents economically active*
Orkney	18,425	8,156
Shetland	22,768	10,957
Colonsay	134	57
Islay	3,792	1,636
Jura	224	97
Mull	2,196	963

Hospices

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the development of the hospice movement in Scotland; what plans he has to encourage this development; and what criteria he applies to the award of financial assistance to individual hospices.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The 13 voluntary hospices in Scotland have benefited over the past three years from the Government's scheme under which at least 50 per cent. of their running costs have been met by health boards. This initiative, which runs until the end of the current financial year, was designed as a transitional measure to enable the hospices and health boards to work together to construct a sound basis for contractual relationships and future development. Its effectiveness and possible future arrangements are now being assessed by the Scottish Office home and health department. Views have been sought from each voluntary hospice and each health board with a hospice in its area. We shall make known the outcome of this assessment when it has been completed.

The main criteria which a hospice must satisfy in order to be eligible for assistance under the initiative are:

—the hospice must be recognised as a charity by the Inland Revenue;

—services must be provided to meet the needs of terminally ill patients (and their families) when those needs can no longer be met by curative treatments;

—medical, nursing and paramedical staff should be employed, who are skilled in the provision of palliative medicine for cancer patients, and for others who require such expert care for a span of time; and

—no charge should be made to patients or their families.

Homelessness

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of the Scottish Council for Single Homeless to discuss the homelessness crisis in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have no immediate plans for such a meeting, but my officials meet representatives of the council on a regular basis.

Placentas

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the supply of placentas by the national health service to *(a)* national health service and university research departments and *(b)* private companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Arrangements for the supply of placentae from NHS hospitals to research departments of the NHS and universities or private companies are the responsibility of individual health boards. Information on the disposal of placentae is not held centrally.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he has given to health boards on the disposal of placentas after childbirth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Placentae are regarded as clinical waste. Guidance produced by the Health and Safety Commission and issued to health boards in June 1982 by the Scottish home and health department requires that placentae should be placed in a suitable bag or bin and incinerated.

Arthritis Care

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of the Arhtritis Care organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. and noble Friend, the Minister for Health in Scotland plans to attend the reception which Arthritis Care has arranged at the House of Commons for 26 November 1992.

Local Government Services

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future operation, management and organisation of *(a)* legal, *(b)* architecture and related services, *(c)* personnel, *(d)* administration, *(e)* planning and development and *(f)* general management services within Scottish local authorities.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The responses to the consultation paper "Competing for Quality: Competition in the Provision of Local Services" are being carefully considered. Announcements will be made in due course about the proposals for extending the list of activities subject to the compulsory competition provisions of the Local Government Act 1988, and on the timetable for implementation.

Members of the European Parliament

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last formally and collectively met Members of the European Parliament representing Scottish constituencies; when he next plans to meet them; what matters he hopes to discuss; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Secretary of State last formally and collectively met Members of the European Parliament representing Scottish constituencies on 9 July 1991. There are no immediate plans for a further such meeting.

Population Statistics

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the most recent percentage of the population which is *(a)* under 16 years, *(b)* 16 to 24 years, *(c)* 25 to 34 years, *(d)* 35 to pensionable age and *(e)* pensionable age in (i) the Paisley, South parliamentary constituency, (ii) Strathclyde region and (iii) Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Annual population estimates by age are not made for parliamentary constituencies. The most recent figures are from the 1981 census of population and are given in the table.

Residents 1981 — *Percentage*

Age	*Paisley, South constituency*	*Strathclyde*	*Scotland*
Under 16	23	24	23
16-24	16	15	15
25-34	13	14	14
35-pensionable age	33	31	31
Pensionable age and over	15	16	17
Total = 100 per cent.	67,430	2,375,410	5,035,315

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing the most up-to-date percentages of the population in each recognised socio-economic group in *(a)* the Paisley, South parliamentary constituency, *(b)* Strathclyde region and *(c)* Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Figures from the 1991 census of population are not yet available. The most recent figures are from the 1981 census and are given in the table.

Residents age 16 or over in employment

per cent.

Socio-economic group	*Paisley South Constituency*	*Strathclyde*	*Scotland*
1. Employers and managers in central and local government, industry, commerce, etc.—large establishments	5	5	5
2. Employers and managers in industry, commerce, etc.—small establishments	4	4	5
3. Professional workers—self employed	0	1	1
4. Professional workers—employees	3	3	3
5.1 Ancillary workers and artists	11	10	10
5.2 Foreman and supervisors—non-manual	1	1	1
6. Junior non-manual worker	23	21	21
7. Personal service workers	8	6	6
8. Foreman and supervisors—manual	3	3	3
9. Skilled manual workers	19	20	19
10. Semi-skilled manual workers	16	13	12
11. Unskilled manual workers	6	7	7
12. Own account workers (other than professional)	2	2	2
13. Farmers—employers and managers	0	0	1
14. Farmers—own account	0	0	1
15. Agricultural workers	0	1	1
16. Members of armed forces	0	1	1
17. Inadequately described occupations	1	1	1
Total	100	100	100

Rape

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, in rank order for each police force, the number of females who have reported being raped during the last 12 months.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is not collected centrally on the number of rapes reported to the police. The available information on the number of rapes recorded by the police is as follows:

Number of rapes recorded by the police in Scotland in 1991

	Number
Strathclyde	138
Lothian and Borders	72
Grampian	42
Dumfries and Galloway	18
Tayside	17
Central	14
Fife	11
Northern	8
Scotland	320

Maedi Visna

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current incidence of Maedi Visna in Scotland; and what steps the Government intend to take to limit the spread of Maedi Visna.

Sir Hector Monro: Maedi Visna is not statutorily notifiable; but one outbreak has been reported, in a flock which was brought into Scotland in 1990. Under the sheep and goat health scheme flock owners may have their flocks tested annually for maedi visna, or may achieve and

maintain maedi visna accredited status. The scheme is regularly publicised at markets and shows; and following the recent outbreak the Scottish Agricultural college has advised veterinarians in private practice to be alert for evidence of the disease.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Government have plans to make Maedi Visna a statutorily notifiable disease within the terms of the Animal Health Act 1981.

Sir Hector Monro: No.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the findings of the Maedi Visna/Caprine arthritis-encephalitis programmes carried out by the Agriculture and Fisheries Department.

Sir Hector Monro: In the year ending 31 March 1992, 20,157 samples were taken from flocks in the sheep and goat health scheme in Scotland, and only one positive reactor was found.

Waste Collection

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the provision of specific financial assistance to local authorities which wish to establish or develop efficient collection and recycling of industrial, commercial and domestic waste.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 June 1992]:* I have no plans for specific grant to authorities for recycling nor to specify that elements of capital spending consents may be used only to finance recycling initiatives. To do so would constrain the freedom enjoyed by local authorities to determine their own spending priorities. Recycling projects identified in authorities' expenditure plans are taken into account when setting the capital expenditure allocations each year.

Shellfish

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the forum on nephrops, to be convened by the chairman of the Sea Fish Industry Authority, is expected to meet before the summer recess.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 June 1992]:* The arrangements for the nephrops forum are being made by the Sea Fish Industry Authority. I understand that the forum is to be held on Friday, 31 July.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what surveys of the quality of Scottish coastal waters in respect of meeting EC standard on shellfish production have been made by DAFS; and whether he will make the findings available.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 June 1992]:* The classification of shellfish harvesting areas to meet the requirements of EC directive 91/492 is being undertaken by my Department's marine laboratory in Aberdeen. The exercise involves establishing the level of bacteriological contamination present in samples of shellfish flesh taken from harvesting areas.

Decisions on classification will be taken later in the year but information on the results so far will be issued to interested parties this month. Thus far the results have been encouraging with some 70 per cent. of results indicating category A, with 20 per cent. suggesting category B and the remainder in category C. But these are early days and some deterioration in the results over the coming months may occur linked to changing conditions.

Environmental Issues

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the documents or projects produced by his Department to be used in schools to raise the awareness of pupils on environmental issues; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* The provision of material for use in schools is primarily a matter for education authorities. The following documents dealing with environmental education have recently been made available to education authorities by the Scottish Office.

This Common Inheritance; A Summary of the White Paper on the Environment (Command 1200) (October 1990).

Environmental Studies 5-14; SOED Working Paper No. 13 (December 1991).

Environment in Trust: a series of leaflets covering: river quality; global atmosphere and air quality; radioactive waste management—A Safe Solution; pollution control systems; One World; Cleaner Seas; The Countryside; and Waste Management and Recycling (February 1992).

The primary education development project has developed materials which it is intended to make available to support the delivery of environmental studies 5-14, and Scotland is currently participating in an OECD project on environmental education which will result in further materials for use in schools.

In addition a working group under the chairmanship of Professor Smyth is currently reviewing the provision of environmental education generally in Scotland. Its findings are expected later this year.

East Kilbride DC

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide details of the arrangements for the sale of individual assets held by East Kilbride development corporation in the value range £250,000 to £4 million.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* The arrangements for the disposal of the assets of the new town development corporations in Scotland are set out in guidance issued by The Scottish Office industry department in April. A copy of the guidance was sent to the hon. Member on 19 May 1992.

EMPLOYMENT

Small Shops

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations she has received from OPEN, the small shops group about the consequences of the unamended working time directive for small convenience stores in the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My predecessors received representations from OPEN about the proposed provisions in the draft directive on working time which would make Sunday a rest day in principle. At the Council of Social Ministers

on 30 April there was general acceptance that any provision in the draft directive on the principle of Sunday rest should not be obligatory in its effect on member states. Negotiations are continuing on these issues.

Training

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment of every 100 people who join employment training, how many will be expected to obtain a job at the end of their training; and what is the figure for a similar number of people who do not join employment training but who are unemployed for the same period.

Mr. McLoughlin: Currently, for every 100 people who join ET, 33 are in employment or self employment three months after leaving. Comparable figures are not available for the unemployed who do not enter ET.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if it is her policy that youth training and employment training trainees be issued with a copy of their individual training plan before they commence training or on request; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Under the terms of the training and enterprise councils' operating agreement, TECs must ensure that all persons entering YT or ET are given an individual training plan agreed between the training provider and the trainee, either immediately upon entry or within a week of such entry. The issued document must contain specified information about the trainee and the training programme. The plan plays a key role in defining training intentions and trainee rights. It is also a fundamental requirement in financial control that training providers should keep a properly completed and up-to-date copy of each plan to support claims for payment. The existence of such a plan is normally regarded as a test for a trainee being recognised as a YT or ET trainee.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for what reasons he decided to reduce the TVEI budget allocated to Staffordshire for 1992-93 from that allocated for 1991-92; what assessment he has made of the effects of this reduced allocation; and if he will now reinstate the 1992-93 allocation to the 1991-92 level.

Mr. McLoughlin: Staffordshire's TVEI budget for 1992-93 has not been reduced. When Staffordshire started its TVEI extension programme in 1988 a phased allocation of the total available funds was agreed with the Department. This was weighted towards the early years when the major changes would be introduced. The planned budget for 1992-93 still applies, apart from the usual annual uprating of 2·5 per cent.

Job Search Seminars

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what is the role, purpose and cost of job search seminars and which unemployed people are eligible for their assistance for Great Britain and for each region; how many job search seminars have been established;how many people have been helped by those seminars; how many people have been directly placed into jobs; how many have been directly placed in other outcomes; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what is the role, purpose and cost of job referral teams and which unemployed people are eligible for their assistance and for Great Britain and for each region *(a)* how many job referral teams have been established, *(b)* how many people have been helped by those teams, *(c)* how many people have been directly placed into jobs and *(d)* how many have been directly placed in other outcomes; and if she will make a statement;

(3) what is the role, purpose and cost of job review workshops and which unemployed people are eligible for their assistance and for Great Britain and for each region *(a)* how many job review workshops have been established, *(b)* how many people have been helped by those workshops, *(c)* how many people have been directly placed into jobs and *(d)* how many have been directly placed in other outcomes; and if she will make a statement;

(4) for Great Britain and for each region how many people have been called in to attend 13-week Employment Service counselling interviews; how many people have actually attended such interviews; and of those who attended *(a)* how many have been placed directly into jobs, *(b)* how many people have been placed in what other outcomes and *(c)* how many have had their benefit stopped or suspended and for what reasons; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred these questions for reply.

Northgate Complex, Glasgow

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list by Department the number of working days that have been lost so far this year at the Northgate complex, Milton street, Glasgow, due to problems with the air conditioning system; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive has no knowledge of any working days lost this year at the Northgate complex, Milton street, Glasgow due to problems with the air conditioning systems.

Sheep Dip

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the recommended protective clothing to be worn when using organo-phosphorous sheep dip; what changes have been made to these recommendations in the last year; and what changes are planned.

Mr. McLoughlin: Advice on protective clothing is given on the label and data sheet of individual products. General information is also available in the free leaflet "Sheep dipping: Protect your health" published by the Health and Safety Executive and available from their local offices.

The leaflet advises that personal protective equipment should include rubber gloves, coverall and a face-shield when handling the concentrate and rubber boots, rubber gloves and waterproof coat or bib apron when handling the diluted liquid and freshly dipped sheep. Sheep dip manufacturers and personal protective equipment suppliers can provide more specific advice.

There have been no changes in the last year to these recommendations, nor are any planned. The Veterinary

Products Committee is, however, reviewing the licences for sheep dip products and will be considering personal protective equipment requirements in formulating its advice to the licensing authority.

I will arrange for copies of the leaflet to be placed in the Library.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of her Department's arrangements for consulting the Data Protection Registrar during the planning stage of any initiative involving the collection, use or disclosure of personal data; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: In the Employment department group instructions have been issued that the Data Protection Registrar should be consulted on proposed legislation which might affect, or be affected by, the Data Protection Act. Such proposals and other planned initiatives are notified to the data protection co-ordinator who consults the Data Protection Registrar as appropriate.

HEALTH

Bowel Complaints

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines are given to general practitioners about performing rectal examinations on patients with bowel complaints.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is for the profession to issue guidance on such clinical matters as appropriate.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State if she will list by regional health authority the average current delay between patients reporting *(a)* symptoms starting and *(b)* diagnosis of a patient with inflammatory bowel disorder.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the guidance which the Department of Health has received on the potential value of a ban on tobacco advertising.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department has received guidance on the potential effect of a ban on tobacco advertising from a number of sources. The Department is currently undertaking a study on the effects of tobacco advertising on tobacco consumption. The contents of this study will be made available in an appropriate form when it is completed.

Waiting Lists

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people in the Cambridge regional health authority are waiting more than six months for a first time referral to a consultant.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not collected in the form requested. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Colin Walker, chairman of East Anglian regional health authority, or Richard King, chairman of Cambridge Health Authority, for details.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the change in the last year in the number of patients waiting over two years for hospital treatment.

Mr. Sackville *[pursuant to the reply, 12 May 1992, c. 489-92]:* Provisional waiting time figures as at 30 April are given in the table. These show that the number of patients waiting more than two years for treatment increased in April by 399 to 1,999. This compares with 51,100 patients at 31 March 1991. Regional general managers have been told to take firm management action to ensure these patients are treated as soon as possible and that the rapid fall in waiting times achieved in 1991-92 is continued.

Provisional waiting time figures—April 1992
In-patients and day cases combined

Region	*Numbers waiting—April 1992*			
	Under one year	*One to two years*	*Over two years*	*Total*
Northern	53,855	4,005	0	57,860
Yorkshire	63,452	6,658	8	70,118
Trent	75,816	9,641	20	85,477
East Anglian	34,367	4,108	77	38,552
North West Thames	46,233	8,894	44	55,171
North East Thames	68,637	8,690	713	78,040
South East Thames	67,360	8,700	175	76,235
South West Thames	44,101	2,576	26	46,703
Wessex	53,598	4,177	0	57,775
Oxford	39,354	5,695	30	45,079
South Western	62,933	3,252	94	66,279
West Midlands	85,761	5,787	214	91,762
Mersey	49,918	803	0	50,721
North Western	78,017	6,864	64	84,945
All regions	823,402	79,850	1,465	904,717
SHAs	12,011	1,397	534	13,942
Total	835,413	81,247	1,999	918,659

Note: Based on provisional figures obtained from regions.

Community Care

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if her Department's estimates of the cost of housing provision necessary to meet the requirements of the Government's community care plans and the implementation of the Children Act 1989, identify separately the respective costs of *(a)* the provision, management and maintenance of the accommodation, *(b)* services directly related to the provision of accommodation, *(c)* personal services, including the provision of food, heating, lighting and laundry services, *(d)* care and support services, including medical and social care, counselling, social work support, skills training and therapy and *(e)* any other requirements;

(2) what are her Department's estimates of the cost of the housing requirements arising from the Government's community care plans and the implementation of the Children Act 1989 for each of *(a)* people with mental health problems, *(b)* people with learning difficulties, *(c)* young people leaving care or who are homeless, *(d)* elderly people, *(e)* people with drug or alcohol abuse problems, *(f)* people with physical disabilities including degenerative and debilitating illnesses and *(g)* other client groups falling within the statutory provisions of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 and the Children Act 1989 in each of the three years from 1993-94 onwards.

Mr. Yeo: The Government do not have estimates broken down in the way requested.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provisions she is making to fund care in the community in the county of Durham; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The personal social services standard spending assessment for county Durham in 1992-93 is £53·3 million. The county council is responsible for determining its social services priorities and how much is to be spent on community care. Similarly, the relevant health authorities are responsible for deciding how much should be spent on community health services from within their general allocations determined by the regional health authority. Announcements about the funding of community care in 1993-94 will be made in the context of this year's local government expenditure survey.

Health Education

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current level of expenditure on health education; and what it was in 1979.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is not possible to calculate overall expenditure on health education because so much health service activity includes both explicit and implicit health education whose costs cannot be separately identified.

The allocation made to the Health Education Authority for health education in England for 1992-93 is nearly £34 million. In 1979-80 the expenditure on health education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland by the Health Education Council was £4·5 million.

The Department also provides funding under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 to a large number of voluntary bodies, many of which undertake health education as part of their overall role.

Childhood Asthma

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been carried out, or is currently being carried out, to see if gas ozone may be an integrated factor in childhood asthma; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We attach particular importance to maintaining the improvements made in child health and are concerned by the increase in reported cases of childhood asthma.

In 1990 an advisory group was convened by the chief medical officer to look at the short-term health effects of exposure to specific air pollutants. Its first report—"Ozone" (published by HMSO in August 1991)—found that there was no conclusive evidence to show that exposure to ozone or other air pollutants at levels occurring in the United Kingdom cause people to become asthmatic, but recommended that there should be further research. A copy of the report is available in the Library.

The Department has raised this with the Medical Research Council; the main agency which supports biomedical and clinical research in the United Kingdom and which in 1990-91—the latest year for which figures are available—spent £1 million on research into asthma. We have also set up a further advisory committee with a wider remit to co-ordinate work on the assessment of the effects of exposure to air pollutants on health.

Investigation

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what limitations there are on where a medical general practitioner may send patients to hospitals for investigation and treatment.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have always made clear that GPs are free to refer their patients to whichever hospital or other unit best meets the needs of the patient. We remain committed to this principle.

Food Hygiene

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she proposes to issue new guidelines and regulations for hygiene training for food handlers arising from the Food Safety Act 1990; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Government are currently considering what the scope of the regulations should be and expect to bring forward proposals later this year.

Patients Charter

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will arrange for an additional right to be added to the patients charter in respect of waitintg times for a first out-patient appointment.

Mr. Sackville: The patients charter already requires that local standards are set for waiting times for first out-patient appointments. We will consider looking at the possibility of extending these to a national level.

Purchasing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which district health authorities in England and Wales have entered into a purchasing consortium arrangement.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally. I understand that a number of district health authorities have entered into purchasing consortium arrangements. The latest information available, which reflects the situation up to May 1992, is set out in the table. The list does not include districts that have merged formally or those that have reached informal agreements to purchase particular services. For more up-to-date information the hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the regional health authorities concerned. The information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

DHA purchasing consorita (by region)

District health authorities	*Name of consortium*
Yorkshire RHA	
Northallerton, Scarborough, York, Harrogate, Airedale (part)	North Yorkshire
Hull, East Yorkshire	North Humberside
Scunthorpe, Grimsby	South Humberside
Calderdale, Huddersfield, Dewsbury	West Yorkshire
Bradford, Airedale (part)	(no name)
North East Thames RHA	
West Essex, North East Essex, Mid Essex	North Essex
Barking, Havering and Brentwood, Southend, and Basildon and Thurrock	(no name)
South East Thames RHA	
Lewisham and North Southwark, Camberwell, West Lambeth	South East London Commissioning Agency
Dartford and Gravesham, Medway, Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells	West Kent Commissioning Agency
South East Kent, Canterbury and Thanet	East Kent Commissioning Agency
Greenwich and Bexley	(no name)
Brighton, Eastbourne, Hastings	East Sussex
Oxford RHA	
Wycombe, Aylesbury Vale, Milton Keynes	Buckingham Purchasing Agency
South Western RHA	
Torbay, Plymouth, and North Devon	Devon Management Consortium
Mersey RHA	
Southport and Formby, South Sefton, St. Helen's and Knowsley, Liverpool	North Mersey
Wirral, Warrington, Halton, Chester, Crewe	Wirral/Cheshire
North Western RHA	
North, Central and South Manchester	Manchester Purchasing Consortium
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble DHA with Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale DHA	(no name)
Other RHAs	
None	

Incontinence Pads

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances incontinence pads can be supplied against a prescription.

Dr. Mawhinney: Incontinence pads are provided by the hospital and community health services free of charge to NHS patients. They may not be prescribed by general practitioners.

Children's Homes, Staffordshire

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to publish the social services inspectorate's report of the inspection of children's homes in Staffordshire.

Mr. Yeo: The report is being published today. Copies are available in the Library. The report is clear that some important improvements have been made in the quality of service and the management of children's homes. No evidence was found of practices similar to "pindown". It is also clear, however, that some recommendations from the previous inspection in 1990 have not been implemented fully and some standards of care remain unacceptable. I have asked Staffordshire county council to produce a detailed action plan to deal with those matters requiring urgent attention and the social services inspectorate will continue to work closely with the council to ensure that the appropriate action is taken.

Dentistry

Dr. Liam Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what would be the average gross earnings from the national health service of a dentist if her proposals on dental fees submitted to the dental rates study group are implemented.

Dr. Mawhinney: We estimate £89,300 per dentist.

Dr. Liam Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of dentists earned a gross income of over £100,000 in 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1991-92, 34·8 per cent. of dentists earned a gross NHS income of over £100,000.

Dr. Liam Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will state, in the last three years for which data are available, *(a)* the actual level of dentists' expenses and *(b)* the figure allowed for by the dental rates study group.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90, the last three years for which data are available, the dental rates study group forecast a level of practice expenses above the actual outturn by £1,851, or 5·5 per cent., £1,650, or 4·5 per cent., and £1,678, or 4·3 per cent. respectively.

Dr. Liam Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what level of expenses she has proposed to the dental rates study group for dentists in 1992-93; and what was the figure in 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney: The sum of £47,228 per dentist, an increase of 11·6 per cent. over that allowed for in 1991-92.

Dr. Liam Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how average dentists' pay has changed since 1979.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since 1979-80, the target average net income of dentists has increased from £11,128 to £35,815 in the current year, a real terms increase of nearly 33 per cent. Our latest proposals are likely to exceed £35,815 by about £5,000, which would mean a real terms increase of about 51 per cent.

Dr. Liam Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the Doctors and Dentists Review Body recommendation for the increase in dentists' income in 1992-93 over 1991-92; and what were the corresponding awards to doctors and nurses.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Doctors and Dentists Review Body's recommendation, which the Government accepted in full, increases dentists' pay for 1992-93 by 8·5 per cent. This is the biggest increase for any large group of NHS staff. Doctors—general medical practitioners—were awarded 5·5 per cent. and nurses and midwives 5·8 per cent.

Warrington General Hospital

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list *(a)* the amount of over or under spending in each of the last five years and *(b)* the throughput of patients over each of the last five years at Warrington general hospital.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. D. Hannah, the chairman of Warrington health authority, for details.

NHS Management Bonuses

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the range of financial bonuses available to *(a)* general and *(b)* senior managers in the national health service;

(2) if she will list the criteria used in deciding whether a general or senior manager in the national health service should receive a financial bonus;

(3) under what circumstances general and senior managers within the national health service may earn financial bonuses in addition to their basic salaries.

Dr. Mawhinney: Financial bonuses may be paid to individual general and senior managers in the national health service on the basis of good performance, depending upon the degree to which they meet agreed objectives decided and set locally by their employing authority. In general, payments are based on a proportion of basic salary and can be up to 8 per cent. per annum for general and 6 per cent. per annum for senior managers —subject to cumulative limits.

Ethnic Minorities

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital consultants employed by the Northern regional health authority are members of ethnic minorities; and how many of these are holders of merits awards.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether her Department records the ethnic origin of hospital consultants who hold merit awards; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

Merit Awards

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she has taken towards publishing background information and material defining the basis upon which individual consultants are awarded merit.

Dr. Mawhinney: The leaflet "Consultants' Distinction Awards" was issued in October 1990 to help consultants and managers understand how the National Health Service distinction and meritorious service award scheme works in England and Wales. A copy is available in the Library.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current value of merit awards to the national health service and to North West Durham health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1990-91, the last year for which complete figures are available, £41,370,322 was paid in distinction awards to consultants in the national health service in England and £31,127 in North West Durham health authority.

North Durham Hospital

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response she has made to the proposals for the siting of the new North Durham hospital; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: North Durham district health authority and Northern regional health authority are currently considering a number of options for replacing the general hospitals at Dryburn and Shotley Bridge. No formal approach has yet been made by the Northern regional health authority to seek the approval in principle of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for any particular proposal.

Child Care

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to publish the response to the European Council of Ministers' recommendation on child

care; and when she intends to draw the recommendation to the attention of local authorities, employers business interests, childcare providers and voluntary organisations.

Mr. Yeo: Article 7 of the Council recommendation requires a response by no later than March 1995. We will be discussing how to carry out this work with other Government Departments. It will be drawn to the attention of other interested parties during the coming months.

Tomlinson Report

Mrs. Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to publish the Tomlinson report on health services in London.

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir Bernard Tomlinson and his team are due to report to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Health and for Education in the autumn. The report will be published shortly afterwards.

South East Thames RHA

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will intervene under regulation 19(4)(b) of the Community Health Council Regulations 1974 (as amended) to require South East Thames regional health authority to carry out further consultations on its capital strategy, "Investing for Excellence in Health."

Mr. Sackville: No. I am satisfied that South East Thames regional health authority has acted properly in this matter.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 11 June 1992

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Heveningham Hall

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his policy towards Heveningham hall.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, when he was responsible for this matter as the Secretary of State for the Environment, decided on 10 December 1991 not to exercise his right to purchase Heveningham hall. I fully share his view about the outstanding importance of this grade I building and the need to maintain the integrity of the house, its decorative scheme and the grounds, and firmly believe that these objectives should be met, where possible, by responsible private ownership. It is for the official receivers to explore this possibility and I understand that they intend to market the hall later this summer. The hall will remain subject to the full rigour of planning and listed building controls and to advice from English Heritage and the local planning authorities. The costs of restoration work to the house and the grounds which is still outstanding should be well within the financial capacity of a new owner.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much is being spent on sport by his Department, compared with May 1979, in real and cash terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My Department is responsible for grant in aid to the Sports Council (GB). The table shows that there has been a significant increase in grant in aid to the council in both real and cash terms.

Grant in aid to the Sports Council (Great Britain)

£ million

Year	*Cash*	*At 1992-93 prices*
1979-80	15·580	37·798
1992-93	48·762	48·762

In addition to this, a new business sponsorship scheme for sport, which will provide £3 million per annum for sport in England, is to be established this year.

A further £55 million, to be channelled through the Department of the Environment, has been committed to sport in support of the Manchester Olympic bid. Government funding for sport is also provided through unhypothecated revenue support grant to local authorities and the Department of the Environment's inner-city programmes. The three territorial sports councils also receive grant in aid from their respective sponsoring Departments.

By reducing the rate of pool betting duty, an extra £60 million per annum has been made available to sport through the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and the Football Trust.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Manufactured Goods

16. **Mrs. Chaplin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest trend in the United Kingdom's share of world trade in manufactured goods.

22. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest trend in the United Kingdom share of world trade in manufactured goods.

Mr. Lamont: I am pleased to report that decades of decline have been halted. The United Kingdom's volume share of world trade in manufactured exports was estimated in the Financial Statement and Budget Report to have risen in 1991 for the third successive year.

Financial Services

17. **Mr. French:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes he proposes in the regulation of financial services following the transfer of responsibilities to his Department.

Mr. Nelson: No changes are proposed in the way financial services are regulated as a result of the transfer.

Public Spending

18. **Dr. Howells:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the public spending planning total for 1993-94.

Mr. Portillo: The public expenditure planning total for 1993-94 has been set at £244·5 billion.

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the total of Government spending for the current financial year which is statutorily or otherwise determined by reference to the retail prices index.

Mr. Portillo: The principal areas of Government expenditure determined by reference to the retail prices index are certain social security benefits and expenditure on public service pensions. For 1992-93, the total of this expenditure falling within the planning total that can be readily identified is £53·1 billion, 23·4 per cent. of the planning total.

Lloyd's Names

20. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the tax position of names in the Lloyd's insurance market.

Mr. Nelson: I have no plans to make such a statement.

Interest Rates

21. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the small business sector on the effect of interest rates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend has received a number of such representations.

Income Tax

23. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals to diminish allowances against income tax as a means of reducing the basic rate.

Mr. Nelson: Our objective remains to move towards a basic rate of 20p when it is prudent to do so.

Borrowing Requirement

24. **Mr. Cann:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the public sector borrowing requirement excluding privatisation receipts in 1991-92.

Mr. Portillo: The public sector borrowing requirement excluding privatisation proceeds in 1991-92 was £21·8 billion.

Manufacturing Trade

25. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when was the last year in which Britain's manufacturing trade was in surplus.

Mr. Nelson: The United Kingdom's balance of trade in manufactures is published by the Central Statistical Office in the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics", May 1992.

Inflation

19. **Mr. John Townend:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest assessment of the outlook for inflation.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend's Budget forecast was for RPI inflation to fall to 3¼ per cent. by the fourth quarter of 1992 and to 3¼ per cent. by the second quarter of 1993.

26. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current level of inflation.

Mr. Nelson: In April the headline rate of RPI inflation was 4·3 per cent.

Government Auctions Directory

Mr. Thomason: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning national press advertisements placed by City Trading Ltd. for a publication described as the Official Directory of Government Auctions; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: None. Several Government Departments use actions for the occasional disposal of goods and each Department makes its own arrangements. There is no official directory of Government auctions.

Intelligence Data

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has held with the Data Protection Registrar with respect to the integration of the existing system customs enforcement network or customs information system within the European Community; whether the system forms part of the Schengen or Trevi arrangements; and whether he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise have consulted the Data Protection Registrar on several occasions during the development of a Community-wide customs information system, an enhancement of the current system customs enforcement network. The system does not form part of either the Schengen or Trevi arrangements.

Companies (Financial Regulations)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessments the Government have made of the impact and additional costs on companies after 1993 of the additional requirements for *(a)* VAT returns, *(b)* INTRASTAT, *(c)* appointment of fiscal agents and *(d)* the United Kingdom's adoption of the maximum limit of £70,000 for fiscal agents.

Sir John Cope: The abolition of routine and systematic formalities at internal frontiers after 1992 means that, overall, United Kingdom industry will benefit from a reduction in business compliance costs incurred currently in intra-EC trade.

Compliance cost assessments—CCA—have not been produced for individual single market requirements owing to difficulties in identifying the different elements of the costs associated with a single administrative document.

Some of the new requirements have only recently been agreed and Customs and Excise are now in the course of preparing a global CCA covering indirect tax, statistical and customs issues.

Drug Imports

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will arrange for *(a)* Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to carry out sampling of all imports of drugs as a matter of routine and *(b)* all drug imports to have documentation certifying their manufacture; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Customs and Excise check imports of drugs on behalf of the Department of Health's Medicines Control Agency. Where appropriate these checks include sampling. Routine sampling and extended documentary requirements for all consignments, however, are not considered necessary by the agency. Testing is also carried out to the agency's standards in the country of origin or after importation.

Debtor Countries

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made towards the complete write-off of official debts of lower income countries to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nelson: To date, five countries have benefited from the Prime Minister's Trinidad terms debt reduction initiative—Benin, Bolivia, Equatorial Guinea, Nicaragua, and Tanzania. A number of other heavily indebted, low-income countries are expected to receive Trinidad terms in the coming months. Under current Trinidad terms agreements, 50 per cent. of eligible debt is written

off, and creditors commit to consider reducing the whole stock of debt in three to four years' time if the debtor country keeps to its agreements with the International Monetary Fund and the Paris club. The Government also participated in a Paris club agreement in 1991 to write off 50 per cent. of the whole stock of Egypt's official bilateral debt.

The Government believe that Trinidad terms should be further developed, along the lines of the Prime Minister's original proposals for the poorest and most heavily indebted countries—all creditors should participate in debt reduction, debt reduction should be increased from 50 per cent. to a benchmark of two thirds, and debt stock reductions should be brought forward. While the Government do not believe that it is necessary, or in the long-term interests of the debtors themselves, to write off their debts completely, the Overseas Development Administration has cancelled most of the debt of the poorest countries arising from aid loans.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to look at the feasibility of debt-for-nature swaps as a part of the debt retirement process

Mr. Nelson: The Government welcome debt-for-nature swaps as an innovative approach to market-based debt reduction in cases where additional resources are made available for environmental projects. As far as the Government's own programmes are concerned, we have to date judged it more effective to deal with debt relief and assistance for environmental projects overseas separately, through the Paris club and through our aid programme.

Company Writs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will make a statement as to why writs issued by his Department last December to financial advisers concerning James Ferguson Holdings of Bradford had not been served within the four-month time limit;

(2) how many Yorkshire and Humberside-based companies face being sued by his Department in connection with the Barlow Clowes affair.

Mr. Nelson: I cannot comment on individual cases.

Manufactured Exports

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much manufactured exports have changed between 1981 and 1991.

Mr. Portillo: The value of UK exports of manufactures was £86 billion in 1991, £51 billion more than in 1981.

Overseas Postings (Housing)

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assistance with regard to housing costs is provided for civil servants posted overseas.

Mr. Dorrell: Civil servants posted overseas are provided with rent-free accommodation appropriate to their grade or status.

Auditing

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those non-departmental public bodies which are annually and comprehensively audited *(a)* by the National Audit Office and *(b)* by private firms of accountants; if he will list the criteria on which such accountants are selected and for what length of time they are appointed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Treasury does not maintain a central list of the auditors of non-departmental public bodies. The publication "Public Bodies 1991" prepared by the Cabinet Office lists the non-departmental public bodies by sponsoring department and indicates those executive bodies which are subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General. The legislation governing the individual bodies will normally determine whether the Comptroller and Auditor General is the statutory auditor or whether a firm of accountants is to be appointed. In the latter case, the appointment is normally the responsibility of the sponsoring Department.

Tax Statistics

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what amount, in cash, the bottom quintile of households, ranked by unadjusted disposable income, paid out in income tax; and what they paid out in value added tax in 1989.

Sir John Cope: In 1989, the average payments for households in the bottom quintile ranked by unadjusted disposable income were about £95 in income tax, and £270 in VAT.

Greyhound Racing

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what agreement has been reached with the British Greyhound Racing Board and the off-course betting industry on how the allocation of greyhound racing's proportion of the 0·25 per cent. reduction in general betting duty will be administered;

(2) what is his estimate of the proportion of the £15 million resulting from the reduction in general betting duty in 1992-93 which would be returned to greyhound racing.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

The size and administration of any voluntary payments by bookmakers to greyhound racing following the reduction in general betting duty are matters for negotiation between the two industries. We understand that those negotiations are under way and have asked to be informed of the outcome in due course.

GDP Growth

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast for gross domestic product growth in 1992.

Mr. Portillo: At Budget time the Chancellor forecast that GDP would grow by 1 per cent. in 1992.

TRANSPORT

Rail Electrification

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about funding arrangements relating to the acquisition of rolling stock for the Leeds-Bradford rail electrification project.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 9 June, at column *116*.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's arrangements for consulting the Data Protection Registrar during the planning stage of any initiative involving the collection, use or disclosure of personal data; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Department's officials are aware of the need to consult the registrar at the appropriate stage of any initiative involving personal data, to establish whether there will be a need for registration. It is the practice to remind directorates from time to time of their responsibilities under the Act. I am satisfied that these arrangements are effective.

Road Closures, Blackheath

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he is likely to come to a decision with regard to the minor road closures in and around Blackheath.

Mr. Norris: The Secretary of State for Transport has received an application from the London borough of Lewisham to stop up lengths of London Pond road, Whitfield road and Duke Humphrey road. The borough council has been asked to provide further information relating to the application. The Secretary of State is unable to decide upon the application until this information has been received.

Greater Manchester Buses

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received the consultants' report into the possible splitting of Greater Manchester Buses Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We have received the consultants' report into the possible splitting of Greater Manchester Buses Ltd. It is now being carefully considered. I propose to discuss the report with the Greater Manchester passenger transport authority.

British Rail (Finance)

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the level of Government investment in British Rail provided in *(a)* million pounds, *(b)* the amount needed to equal the 1979 allocation in real terms and *(c)* the percentage excess or shortfall compared to the 1979 allocation in real terms; and if he will provide a breakdown by the following (i) investment ceiling, (ii) total investment by BR and subsidiaries and (iii) railways for each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* British Rail's investment ceiling for 1992-93 is currently set at £983 million for the existing railway and at £755 million for the new railway. The combined ceiling for both existing and new railways therefore stands at £1,738 million. Rail investment by BR in 1979 was £620 million in 1992-93 prices. The ceiling for 1992-93 therefore represents an increase of 180 per cent. on the figure for 1979.

The annual breakdown by investment ceiling, total investment and rail investment appears in the table.

British Rail Investment 1979 to 1991-92
£ million in 1992-93 prices

	Investment Ceiling	*Group Investment*	*Rail Investment*
1979	n/a	n/a	620
1980	730	693	635
1981	744	576	519
1982	750	469	423
1983	n/a	465	417
1984-85	n/a	511	438
1985-86	n/a	605	590
1986-87	n/a	625	572
1987-88	n/a	751	715
1988-89	n/a	762	692
1989-90	n/a	868	831
1990-91	n/a	932	959
1991-92	1,202	n/a	1,045

Notes:
1. Rail investment excludes non-rail business such as BR Property Board, ships and hotels.
2. 1984-85 was a 15-month period. The figure given is a 12-month equivalent.
3. The figure for rail investment for 1991-92 is a DTp estimate.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how reports of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration are disseminated within his Department.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Reports prepared by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration are always shown to the permanent secretary and seen by the Department's senior managers. Where necessary, local managers are asked to comment on the matters raised by the Parliamentary Commissioner.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many investigations have been initiated by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration in connection with the work of his Department for each year since 1986; and how many complaints have been upheld in whole or in part in each of those years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The jurisdiction of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration was extended on 1 January 1991 by section 110 of the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990 to include administrative duties carried out by staff of courts and tribunals appointed by the Lord Chancellor.

Three cases had been referred to the Parliamentary Commissioner in 1986; one in 1987; seven in 1988; eight in 1989, and three in 1990 of which it was decided 14 fell outside his jurisdiction. The remaining seven did not result in recommendations. In 1991, nine cases were investigated of which five resulted in findings against the Department. During 1992 three cases have been referred to the Parliamentary Commissioner, but none of those investigations has yet been completed.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what disciplinary action

has been taken by his Department in relation to matters referred to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration in each year since 1986.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No disciplinary action has been found necessary as the result of a case being referred to the Parliamentary Commission for Administration during the period from 1986.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list for each year since 1986 in respect of the reports of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration where financial payment or payments will or should be made by his Department as directed or indicated, *(a)* aggregate amount for all investigations, *(b)* the highest amounts for any one investigation, *(c)* the length of time taken between his Department indicating that a payment will be made or informing that a payment should be made and such payments being made and *(d)* how many such payments were not made within seven days and what reasons there are for such delays.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No payments were recommended by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration in the years 1986, 1987, 1988, 1990 and 1992. In 1989 one payment of £75 was made and in 1991 payments totalling £1,467·61 were made. The largest of these payments was £1,009·42.

The time taken between acknowledging the Parliamentary Commissioner's recommendation and making payment is kept to a minimum.

Northern Circuit

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary Lord Chancellor's Department what costs were incurred in *(a)* court fees, *(b)* counsel fees, *(c)* agents, *(d)* expense rates, *(e)* charging rate, *(f)* additional costs and *(g)* total claimed by any solicitor or the Treasury Solicitor, in relation to matters involving the administration of the courts on the northern circuit, the northern circuit administrator or members of his staff in each year since 1986.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information in the form requested could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on how many occasions solicitors or the Treasury Solicitor have been instructed to advise or act for his Department, and by whom, in respect of matters relating to the northern circuit administrator, his staff or any matter involving the administration of the courts on the northern circuit, in each year since 1986.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information is not collected in the form requested and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Vehicle Clamping

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the number of vehicles clamped by private companies operating under the jurisdiction of the police in each of the last three years for which complete figures are available; and what payments were made to the companies.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the commissioner that the information requested is as follows:

Financial year	*Clamps applied*	*Total payment* £
1989-90	157,401	1,680,289
1990-91	149,766	1,512,093
1991-92	128,079	1,322,155

Prisons Reports

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each of the last five years the date on which he received each report from his inspector of prisons and the date on which each report was published.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Details covering the last five years can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The dates of all reports delivered to the Secretary of State from January 1991 are given in the tables.

Establishment	*Date report submitted to Secretary of State*	*Date report published*
Short Inspections[1]		
Swinfen Hall	24 January 1991	20 June 1991
Castington	15 February 1991	25 July 1991
Liverpool	8 March 1991	6 August 1991
Pentonville	11 March 1991	6 August 1991
Downview	25 March 1991	15 October 1991
Ford	26 March 1991	27 August 1991
Drake Hall	25 April 1991	27 August 1991
Send	3 May 1991	8 October 1991
Shrewsbury	8 May 1991	9 January 1992
Northeye	20 May 1991	9 January 1992
Deerbolt	8 July 1991	31 March 1992
Parkhurst	11 July 1991	6 February 1992
Hull	15 July 1991	11 February 1992
Camp Hill	6 September 1991	2 June 1992
Huntercombe	23 September 1991	—
Risley	23 October 1991	2 June 1992
Rudgate	8 November 1991	2 April 1992
Werrington House	8 November 1991	2 April 1992
Stanford Hill	13 January 1992	—
Feltham	11 February 1992	28 May 1992
Leyhill	11 February 1992	—
Stoke Heath	14 February 1992	—
Styal	26 February 1992	—
Birmingham	5 March 1992	—
Latchmere House	24 March 1992	—
Stafford	15 April 1992	—
Manchester	15 April 1992	—
Wymott	30 April 1992	—
Full Inspections[1]		
Stafford	17 January 1991	9 July 1991
Thorp Arch	11 February 1991	6 August 1991
The Verne	14 February 1991	25 July 1991
Hollesley Bay Colony	28 February 1991	24 September 1991
North Sea Camp	14 March 1991	24 September 1991
Littlehey	25 March 1991	5 September 1991
Full Sutton	17 April 1991	17 December 1991
Swaleside	30 April 1991	6 February 1992
Wormwood Scrubs	14 May 1991	19 December 1991
Lindholme	30 May 1991	30 January 1992
New Hall	10 June 1991	20 February 1992
Canterbury	10 September 1991	9 January 1992
Garth	26 September 1991	11 February 1992

Establishment	Date report submitted to Secretary of State	Date report published
Haverigg	18 September 1991	27 February 1992
Aylesbury	30 September 1991	[2]—
Bedford	11 October 1991	31 March 1992
Dartmoor	31 October 1991	2 June 1992
Holloway	31 October 1991	11 March 1992
Frankland	25 November 1991	2 April 1992
Glen Parva	29 November 1991	—
Wakefield	31 January 1992	—
Grendon	13 February 1992	—
Leicester	12 March 1992	—
Sudbury	31 March 1992	—
Lewes	30 April 1992	—
Long Lartin	29 May 1992	—
Other Reports		
HMCIP's Annual Report	7 November 1991	11 December 1991
Report by HMCIP into the escape by two category A inmates from HMP Brixton	31 July 1991	5 August 1991

[1] Once publication has been approved it normally takes a month to arrange.
[2] To be published on 25 June 1992.

Prevention of Terrorism

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were *(a)* the number and length of detentions in Britain under the Prevention of Terrorism Acts since 1 January and *(b)* the number and length of detentions in Greater Manchester since 1 January.

Mr. Jack: Statistics on the number of people detained under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 in Great Britain during the first quarter of 1992 are published in "Home Office Statistical Bulletin 9/92". A copy of this bulletin is in the Library. Details of the length of detentions for all detainees from 1 January to 9 June are given in the table:

Persons detained under the Prevention of Terrorism legislation by length of detention

Great Britain, 1 January-9 June 1992	Number of persons
Less than 2 hours	2
2 hours and less than 4	4
4 hours and less than 8	20
8 hours and less than 12	7
12 hours and less than 24	18
24 hours and less than 36	9
36 hours and less than 48	7
Total under 48 hours	67
2 days and less than 3	3
3 days and less than 4	5
4 days and less than 5	—
5 days and less than 6	—
6 days and less than 7	—
7 days	—
Total 48 hours or more	8
Total detained	75

One person has been detained in Greater Manchester under the Act since 1 January. The detention in this case was for nine hours.

Carriers' Liability

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total sum of fines issued to carriers since the introduction of the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987; and what is the total in outstanding fines.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The total sum is £44·01 million, of which £21·78 million is outstanding.

Housing Services for the Elderly

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make arrangements for Housing Services for the Elderly to have free access to fire control ex-directory telephone numbers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have no reason to believe that the current arrangements whereby emergency telephone calls are routed through the public telephone operators are unsatisfactory. Exceptionally, fire control ex-directory numbers may be made available by a chief fire officer to high-risk establishments and to emergency alarm receiving companies at their expense in order to receive calls directly in the brigade area.

Prisoners

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give figures for the total number of prisoners held in HMP Nottingham in 1979 and in each following year until 1992; and what category of prisoner they were.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The readily available information is given in the table. The population has been taken as at 31 March for each of the years requested in order to include the latest figures for 1992. All inmates held were in the category adult sentenced males.

Population of Nottingham closed training prison on 31 March 1979-1992
Adult sentenced males

Year	Sentence length: Up to and including 18 months	Over 18 months and up to 4 years	Over 4 years	Total as at 31 March
1979	4	188	64	256
1980	1	168	89	258
1981	4	170	81	255
1982	7	159	84	250
1983	10	159	89	258
1984	5	185	108	298
1985	3	151	124	278
1986	2	133	157	292
1987	1	111	179	291
1988	3	100	191	294

Year	Sentence length: Up to and including 18 months	Over 18 months and up to 4 years	Over 4 years	Total as at 31 March
1989	4	97	189	290
1990	3	89	176	268
1991	3	74	153	230
1992	2	36	174	212

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by prison establishment for the past 12 months, the number of inmates that have had self-inflicted wounds; and what was the comparative figure for *(a)* 24 months, *(b)* 36 months and *(c)* 48 months previously.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of self-inflicted injuries at each prison service establishment in 1991 is listed in the table. Information for earlier years is not available.

Incidents of self-injury in prison service establishments during 1991

Establishment	Total
Acklington	4
Albany	—
Aldington	—
Ashwell	2
Askham Grange	1
Aylesbury	19
Bedford	20
Belmarsh	6
Birmingham	48
Blantyre House	—
Blundeston	7
Brinsford	10
Bristol	5
Brixton	29
Brockhill	35
Bullwood Hall	29
Camp Hill	11
Canterbury	15
Cardiff	29
Castington	3
Channings Wood	5
Chelmsford	17
Coldingley	1
Cookham Wood	33
Dartmoor	29
Deerbolt	23
Dorchester	1
Dover	20
Downview	—
Drake Hall	2
Durham	66
East Sutton Park	—
Eastwood Park	1
Elmley	—
Erlestoke House	4
Everthorpe	20
Exeter	35
Featherstone	10
Feltham	106
Ford	—
Frankland	18
Full Sutton	20
Garth	8
Gartree	5
Glen Parva	76
Gloucester	17
Grendon	38
Guys Marsh	2
Haslar	2
Hatfield	1
Haverigg	3
Hewell Grange	—
Highpoint	10
Hindley	70
Hollesley Bay	15
Holloway	95
Hull	116
Huntercombe	21
Kingston	—
Kirkham	1
Kirklevington Grange	15
Lancaster	5
Latchmere House	—
Leeds	130
Leicester	27
Lewes	25
Leyhill	3
Lincoln	117
Lindholme	12
Littlehey	13
Liverpool	74
Long Lartin	22
Low Newton (Male)	55
Low Newton (Female)	3
Maidstone	6
Manchester	35
Moorland	117
Morton Hall	2
The Mount	1
New Hall	113
Northallerton	17
Northeye	2
North Sea Camp	—
Norwich	6
Nottingham	4
Onley	34
Oxford	14
Parkhurst	2
Pentonville	8
Portland	39
Preston	7
Pucklechurch (Female)	112
Ranby	4
Reading	9
Risley (Male)	—
Risley (Female)	50
Rochester	68
Rudgate	1
Send	—
Shepton Mallet	4
Shrewsbury	34
Stafford	36
Standford Hill	1
Stocken	8
Stoke Heath	29
Styal	304
Sudbury	5
Swaleside	2
Swansea	10
Swinfen Hall	4
Thorn Cross	4
Thorp Arch	—
Usk	3
The Verne	3
Wakefield	12
Wandsworth	9
Wayland	7
Wellingborough	—
Werrington	3
Wetherby	19
Whatton	1
Whitemoor	—
Winchester	10

Establishment	Total
Wormwood Scrubs	32
Wymott	9
Total	1,615

Deportation Orders

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action is being taken on applicants for asylum who have received paragraph 101 refusals on the basis of non-appearance at interviews; and how many of those refused since 1 December 1991 have been served with removal or deportation orders.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Unless an asylum applicant refused under paragraph 101 of the immigration rules is subsequently in touch with the Department, he remains liable to arrest and administrative action to enforce his departure. Information about the numbers subject to such action is not collected in the form requested.

Rape

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in rank order for each police force in England and Wales, the number of females who have reported being raped during the last 12 months.

Mr. Jack: The available information held centrally relates to the number of notifiable offences of rape recorded by the police and is given in the table. Although there are no figures for the number of offences reported, recent Home Office research shows that 61 per cent. of allegations of rape were recorded by the police in 1989.

Notifiable offences of rape recorded by the police by police force area—1991

England and Wales

Police force area	Number of offences
Metropolitan police district	1,158
Greater Manchester	227
West Midlands	214
West Yorkshire	213
Hampshire	136
Kent	115
Nottinghamshire	111
Thames Valley	99
Avon and Somerset	98
Northumbria	93
South Wales	91
Essex	83
South Yorkshire	74
Sussex	73
Merseyside	63
Cambridgeshire	62
Norfolk	62
Suffolk	61
Humberside	61
Devon and Cornwall	60
Lancashire	58
North Wales	55
Staffordshire	53
West Mercia	50
Dorset	49
Dyfed-Powys	47
Cleveland	47
Wiltshire	46
Bedfordshire	46
Hertfordshire	46
Durham	45
Northamptonshire	44
Surrey	41
Gwent	38
Lincolnshire	38
Leicestershire	38
Cheshire	37
Derbyshire	34
Gloucestershire	23
Cumbria	19
North Yorkshire	19
Warwickshire	18
City of London	—
England and Wales	4,045

Aquatic Environment

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the responsibilities and duties of his Department and any agency which reports to his Department in relation to inshore waters, intertidal areas and maritime land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the Government's memorandum on this subject which was submitted to the Environment Committee of this House in the previous Session. It has now been published by HMSO as part of the Environment Committee's report on coastal zone protection and planning, volume II, minutes of evidence and appendices.

Intelligence Data

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement, in the form that does not jeopardise national security, on the criteria used by the Security Service to help it decide whether personal data should be retained by it; and how such criteria have varied since 1989.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have nothing to add to the Security Service Commissioner's report on Security Service record-keeping policy in his annual report for 1991 and his conclusion that the general policy on retention of records was acceptable.

Subversion

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide, in a form that does not jeopardise national security, generalised examples of subversive activities that do not involve law breaking; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No.

Ethnic Minorities

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what means and through what channels section 11 resources will be allocated to colleges of further education following their removal from local authority control.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: After further education and sixth form colleges leave local authority control on 1 April 1993, they will be eligible to receive, and to apply for, section 11 grant direct. Posts already approved for funding from 1 April 1992 will continue to be eligible for grant, with the

contribution previously made by the local authority being met by the Further Education Funding Council. Detailed administrative arrangements are under consideration.

HEALTH

Eye Tests

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the circumstances under which pensioners may be asked to pay for eye tests.

Dr. Mawhinney: Pensioners as a group have never been automatically exempted from payment of optical costs, including those for sight tests. Pensioners who receive income support are entitled to free NHS sight tests. Pensioners on a low income can claim help with their optical costs under the NHS low-income scheme.

Community Health Services

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how spending on health and community health services *(a)* for elderly people and *(b)* for mentally ill people has changed since 1979.

Mr. Yeo: Available data are given in the table. Estimated spending on services for elderly people does not include spending on the acute hospital services which are used by people in all age groups including elderly people.

Estimated Hospital and Community Health Service (HCHS) spending on services for elderly people and for mentally ill people 1979-80 and 1990-91.

	Spending (£ million cash)		Real terms increase[1]
	1979-80	1990-91	(per cent.)
Services for elderly people	651	1,927·6	36·5
Services for mentally ill people	592·8	1,763·5	37·1
Total HCHS expenditure (excluding joint finance)	5,309·5	14,745·8	28·0

[1] After allowing for changes in general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator.

Breast Cancer

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the clinical trials at London's Royal Marsden hospital that are planned to discover if patients suffering from breast cancer would benefit from hormone replacement therapy; and when she expects the results will be published.

Mr. Sackville: There are no firm plans to hold such a trial at the Royal Marsden hospital.

Organophosphates

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been carried out into the effects of organophosphates on the human body and methods of entry into the human body; who carried out that research; and who is carrying out research currently.

Mr. Sackville: Organophosphate toxicology is a very heavily researched area and many papers reporting such research are published each month in the world's scientific journals. Organophosphate research was recently reviewed by Ballantyne and Marrs—"Clinical and experimental toxicology of organophosphates and carbamates", published by Butterworth—Heinemann, Oxford, 1992.

A number of groups are carrying out research into the action of organophosphates including, in the United Kingdom:

(a) Medical Research Council Laboratories, Carshalton (Dr. Martin Johnson).
(b) University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Professor Peter Blaine).
(c) Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down, Salisbury.

In addition, clinical research has been carried out at the poisons units, particularly by Dr. Virginia Murray in London and Dr. Allister Vale in Birmingham, and the Health and Safety Executive is proposing to carry out a study of farm staff and contract workers using organophosphate sheep dips.

Outside the United Kingdom, there are numerous groups working on organophosphates, notably:

Belgium – University of Ghent (Dr. Willems).
Canada – DRES, Suffield, Alberta (Dr. Clements).
Hungary – Szent-Gyorgy University, Szeged (Professor Desi).
Italy – University of Padua (Professor Lotti).
Portugal – Coimbra University Hospital (Dr. Pimentel).
USA – Vanderbilt University, Nashville (Professor Dettbarn).

Trust Hospitals

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all trust hospitals together with their postal addresses and the names of their chief executives.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Nursing Beds

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing beds within the private sector there are within the Seaham, Murton, Easington, Peterlee, Shotton, Horden, Blackhall and South Hetton area.

Mr. Yeo: Information is not available in the form requested.

Dentistry

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the membership and remuneration of the members of the Dental Estimates Board.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Dental Practice Board—DPB—previously known as the Dental Estimates Board, comprises five dental members, two lay members and the chief executive, who is also a lay member. Current membership is as follows:

Chairman (dentist)
Mr. T. H. Farrell
Vice Chairman (dentist)
Mr. W. H. Evans
Dental Members
Mr. D. W. Lester
Mr. R. A. Gorham
Mr. H. G. Lewis
Lay Members
Mr. D. A. Dryer
Mrs. C. A. Osborne
Chief Executive
Mr. J. A. Taylor

The chairman receives remuneration of £23,658·18 per annum for an average attendance of 2·5 days per week, plus £182 for each additional day of attendance. He is also entitled to travel and subsistence payments for attendance at meetings held away from the DPB site at Eastbourne.

Other members, with the exception of the chief executive, receive a fee of £124·68 for each day of attendance at the DPB. They are also entitled to travel and subsistence payments.

The chief executive is a full-time employee of the DPB. He is not remunerated separately as a board member.

Community Care

Mr. Godsiff: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she last met the Association of Directors of Social Services to discuss community care.

Mr. Yeo: My hon. Friend the Minister for Health last met the Association of Directors of Social Services on 4 June.

Child Care

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to improve child care provision, following the EC child care recommendations.

Mr. Yeo: The EC child care recommendation, adopted on 31 March 1992, will contribute to the continuing debate on child care. The Department's latest statistics, "Children's day care facilities at 31 March 1991, England"; a copy of which is available in the Library, show that in England between 1988 and 1991 registered day nursery places grew by 112 per cent. from 36,000 to 77,000 and the number of registered child-minders by 42 per cent. from 73,600 to 104,900. The Children Act 1989 gives a new duty to local authorities to review the child-care services used by children aged under eight in their area every three years and publish a report. This requirement gives local authorities a strategic role in child care and provides a legal framework for production of a local child care plan which will result in sensible expansion and development.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients had been waiting for hospital treatment *(a)* under one year, *(b)* one to two years and *(c)* over two years at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), on 10 June at columns *219-20.*

Community Psychiatric Nursing

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the current review of community psychiatric nursing will be completed; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 9 June 1992]:* The review of mental health nursing was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in her speech to the Royal College of Nursing congress on 27 April 1992.

The precise terms of reference, the chairmanship and membership of the steering group for the review, together with its method of working, are being finalised.

The review will be concerned with all aspects of mental health nursing including community psychiatric nursing and will examine practice, leadership and education.

The review will be taken forward by a multi-disciplinary steering group. The chairmanship and membership of the group will be announced by mid-July. The first meeting of the group will take place in September and the work will be completed within a year.

The work of this review will feed into that of the mental health task force which was announced at the end of February.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Personal Data

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's arrangements for consulting the Data Protection Registrar during the planning stage of any initiative involving the collection, use or disclosure of personal data; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Officials are aware of the need to consult the registrar about proposed legislation or other initiatives which might affect or be affected by the Data Protection Act 1984, and will consult him as necessary when planning the collection, use or disclosure of automated personal data.

Developing Nations (Trade)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what policies Her Majesty's Government pursue to promote trade between developing nations and the EC.

Mr. Needham: I have been asked to reply.

The Government support the Community's efforts, as in the current GATT Uruguay round negotiations, to create open trading conditions which will increase trade with all countries, including the developing nations. In addition, the European Community gives preferential access to most products from developing countries under its generalised system of preferences scheme. This provides especially generous treatment for the least developed. The trade provisions of the Lomé convention also provide access to Community markets at zero duty for most products from the African, Caribbean and Pacific states.

Clothing and Textiles

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the position of the United Kingdom Government regarding the import of Bangladeshi textiles and clothing into the EC after the creation of the single market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: I have been asked to reply.

Regulation of textiles and clothing imports from Bangladesh into the European Community is governed by the multi-fibre arrangement bilateral agreement on trade in textiles between the two parties, the provisions of which are unlikely to be significantly affected by completion of the single market.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the current quotas for textile and clothing imports into the United Kingdom from countries covered by the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Needham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to EC regulation 369/92 published in the "Official Journal of the European Communities", No. L45 of 20 February 1992, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

EDUCATION

Student Grants

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the cost of producing and distributing "student grants and loans"; and how many copies are being produced.

Mr. Forman: We plan to produce and distribute at least 900,000 copies of "Student Grants and Loans: A brief guide 1992-93" at an estimated cost of about £88,000. We shall produce additional copies if there is sufficient demand.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Greenwich Generating Station

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 19 May, *Official Report*, column *104*, how many of the representations he has received about the MetroPower proposals to redevelop Greenwich generating station have supported the proposal and how many have objected to it.

Mr. Eggar Under the Electricity (Applications for Consent) Regulations 1990 an opportunity must be given for objections to the MetroPower proposals to be registered with my Department. More than 100 objections were so registered by the date specified under the regulations. The regulations do not provide for support for proposals to be registered.

Waste Strategy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to prepare a United Kingdom-wide strategy for the commercial energy industry covering extraction, conversion, transport and waste over the next 30 years.

Mr. Eggar: No. The Government have set out their policy designed to ensure that consumers obtain energy efficiently. Strategy blueprints on the lines proposed by the hon. Member do not work and have been rejected even by the former socialist economies.

Natural Gas

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action is being undertaken by his Department to reduce the flaming of natural gas in the oil extraction process.

Mr. Eggar: My consent is required to the flaring of any gas produced in association with oil in the United Kingdom. In granting such consents, my policy is to ensure that flaring is restricted to the minimum amounts which are consistent with maintaining safe and economic operations.

Energy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much has been allocated during each of the last five years by his Department to fund research and development on *(a)* energy produced from fossil fuel sources and *(b)* the development of energy from renewable sources.

Mr. Eggar: Following is the information requested:

(a)

	£ million
1987-88	9·8
1988-89	7·9
1989-90	5·6
1990-91	15·9
1991-92	8·4

(b)

	£ million
1987-88	16·1
1988-89	16·3
1989-90	17·9
1990-91	20·9
1991-92	24·0

Notes:

[1] 1987-88 and 1988-89 figures are taken from the annual review of Government-funded research and development. These figuress relate essentially to Frascati research and development.

[2] 1989-90 and 1990-91 figures are final outturn.

[3] 1991-92 figures are taken from main estimates.

Coal Imports

Mr. Cummings: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the tonnages of coal imports into the ports of Sunderland, Seaham, Hartlepool and Teesside during the years 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91; and what were the points of origin.

Mr. Eggar: Coal imports for these areas are shown in the table. Imports at Seaham are recorded under the port of Sunderland. Imports at Teesside are shown for the port of Middlesbrough.

Thousand tonnes[1]

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Sunderland			
United States	58	109	63
Australia	184	35	0
Venezuela	104	34	9
Soviet Union	49	0	56
Canada	29	9	22
Germany	16	24	7
Other countries	64	41	42
Total	503	251	198
Hartlepool			
Colombia	22	44	101
Poland	67	25	14
Soviet Union	57	5	0
Australia	51	2	0
Other countries	26	5	0
Total	224	82	115
Middlesbrough			
Australia	1,393	1,254	1,407
United States	1,130	1,106	722
Poland	322	71	20

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Canada	117	169	25
Other countries	48	181	215
Total	3,010	2,781	2,388

[1] Figures are rounded independently and a total may therefore differ from the sum of its constituent parts.

Waste

Mr. Evennett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to announce the public inquiry into the Cory waste-to-energy incinerator proposal in Belvedere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Arrangements for the public inquiry are nearing completion and I expect to announce the details shortly. I will write to my hon. Friend once they are finalised.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if the United Kingdom has set a target for the percentage of total electricity supply from renewable resources.

Mr. Eggar: The Government are working towards the establishment of 1,000 MW of new renewables-based electricity generation capacity in the United Kingdom by the year 2000. Targets for the exploitation of renewable energy resources are under consideration, as part of the current review of the Government's renewable energy programme.

Earth Summit

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the impact for fuel choice and generating plant capacity, investment, mothballing and permanent retirement of treaty undertakings on global warming on offer at the Rio de Janeiro Earth summit conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 9 June 1992]:* The Government's commitments to the control of carbon dioxide emissions under the framework convention on climate change will take into account a wide range of issues, which in the electricity sector include the expected installation of high-efficiency gas-fired plant, the fostering of renewables under the non-fossil fuel obligation, and the retirement of some existing generating plant.

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the result to date of the writs issued by his Department to the Midland bank and other financial intermediaries in respect of the Barlow Clowes affair.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

A number of proceedings have been commenced following the statement by the Secretary of State to the House on 19 December 1989. I cannot comment on individual cases.

WALES

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the last date on which he considers it would be reasonable to indicate that his plans for local government reorganisation will go forward in a time scale that woud make it convenient to cancel the county council elections currently planned for May 1993.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave on Friday 5 June 1992, at column *662*.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether it is his intention to introduce legislation to give effect to his plans for local governmnent reorganisation in Wales during the current session of Parliament.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave on Wednesday 10 June, at column *182*.

A483 (Bridge Repairs)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the reasons for the bridge repairs at Rosset, near Wrexham on the A483; and who is to pay for them.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The bridge is not being repaired. Concrete sections of the bridge are being treated with a chemical to protect the surfaces from the harmful effects of winter salting. The Welsh Office will pay for the work.

Singleton Hospital

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will announce his decision about the night casualty service at Singleton hospital, Swansea.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: As soon as possible.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 June.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 June.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is in Rio de Janeiro to attend the Earth summit and will have bilateral meetings later today with various Heads of Government.

Women

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to increase the number of women in the Cabinet.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister considers all the excellent candidates available on merit at the appropriate times.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the actions he intends to take to promote the interests of women.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has recently set up a new ministerial sub-committee on women's issues to review and develop the Government's policy and strategy on issues of special concern to women. The committee will be chaired by the Secretary of State for Employment, who now has overall responsibility for co-ordinating women's issues within Government. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has also appointed Baroness Denton, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms, as Government co-chair of the Women's National Commission which will continue to represent the concerns of women to the Government.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement about the measures being taken to increase the number of women in the upper levels of the civil service.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

Appointements and promotions at all levels in the civil service are made on the basis of merit, qualifications and suitability for the job. Under a new programme for action to achieve quality of opportunity for women in the civil service, launched in March this year, Departments and agencies are developing and implementing action plans tailored to their own needs. The plans aim at improving the quality and quantity of women's opportunities at senior and all other levels.

Family Conciliation

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister what proposals he has for funding family conciliation services; which departmental budget funds such services at present; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

Local family conciliation services in England and Wales are currently funded by the voluntary and private sectors with assistance in some areas from the probation service and local authorities. No Department currently funds such services directly and the Government have no current plans to introduce such funding.

The Lord Chancellor's Department is considering the role of conciliation services in England and Wales as part of the wider review of family law announced earlier this year.

Conservation Unit

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to develop an interdepartmental conservation and development co-ordinating unit with a mandate to examine departmental policy and investment proposals prior to their presentation to Cabinet.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

This is not necessary. Cabinet procedure already requires that all papers which are prepared for Cabinet and ministerial committees should, where appropriate, cover any significant costs or benefits to the environment. There is a ministerial committee on the environment, whose terms of reference are

"to consider questions of environmental policy".

Each Government Department has a Minister responsible for environmental matters in his or her Department. There is also other co-ordinating machinery.

CIS (Research)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his response to the recommendations of the report he commissioned last year from the Royal Society on ways to assist scientists in the Commonwealth of Independent States to maintain their research base.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 20 May at column *137*.

Environmental Audit

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to ensure that all Government Departments are subject to periodic environmental audits.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

Government Departments publish accounts of their environmental performance in their annual departmental reports. This follows a commitment set out in the 1990 environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance", Cm 1200, and reaffirmed in the 1991 first-year report on that White Paper, Cm. 1655.

Earth Summit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what resource commitments have been made by Her Majesty's Government to support the institutional requirements to implement United Nations Conference on Environmental and Development decisions.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

We expect agreement to be reached during the Earth summit on the most effective and efficient institutions to follow up recommendations made at the UN Conference on Environment and Development. We believe that a sustainable development commission is the right mechanism. We will consider what financial resources are appropriate once the institutional framework has been agreed.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) of 2 June, *Official Report*, column *392*, if he will list the heads of Government he has met since 9 April, and the date on which he discussed with them the Earth summit.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has nothing further to add to the answer he gave to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North on 2 June at column *392*.

Secret Services

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list all the present and past locations in Britain of the secret intelligence service and of the Security Service.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

It would not be in the interests of national security to provide this information.

Honours System

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister what is the latest estimated annual cost to public funds of operating the honours system.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

Figures for the cost of operating the honours system could not be provided other than at disproportionate cost.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Rape

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of females who have reported being raped during the last 12 months in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mates: I am informed by the Chief Constable that the most recent figures available show that during the 12-month period 1 May 1991 to 30 April 1992 the Royal Ulster Constabulary received 108 reports of rape from females.

Chemical Waste

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the chemicals and the amounts of such chemicals removed from the old Mackies factory in Belfast after the factory was vacated; by whom the materials were removed; by what means final disposal was effected and by whom; what steps he has taken to assure himself that the disposal was safe and effective; what role his Department had in the clearing of such chemicals from the site; and why the chemicals were not removed and disposed of before the premises were vacated.

Mr. Atkins: Lummus Mackie Ltd. has not yet fully vacated its old factory in Belfast. The move to new premises should be completed by the end of August this year, by which time it is understood that all potentially harmful chemicals will have been removed.

Fire Regulations

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects all premises registered under the Northern Ireland tourism legislation to comply with the necessary fire regulations; and when he expects the Northern Ireland Fire Service to complete inspection of all such existing premises for compliance with such regulations as are required under the 1984 order.

Mr. Atkins: Applications for the grant of a fire certificate have been made on behalf of 372 premises in the categories covered by Northern Ireland tourism legislation. Of these, 69 remain to be inspected and this process is expected to be completed by December 1993. Sixty-four premises have so far been refused certificates.

Traffic

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the traffic volume on *(a)* the Belfast road into Larne and *(b)* the Dublin road south of Newry to the border.

Mr. Atkins: The average daily traffic flow is 13,850 vehicles and 6,000 vehicles respectively.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's arrangements for consulting the Data Protection Registrar during the planning stage of any initiative involving the collection, use or disclosure of personal data; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates: The Northern Ireland Office and each of the Northern Ireland Departments have appointed a data protection officer responsible for the maintenance of the Department's data protection register. Recently, with the assistance of the office of the Data Protection Registrar, all Departments reviewed their effectiveness in fulfilling the requirements of the Act and subsequently initiated a number of minor refinements to existing practice. There is an inter-departmental data protection officers' forum in Northern Ireland which ensures regular review of requirements as well as the effective read-across of departmental experiences.

Road Schemes

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show the total sums projected in the appropriate orders for *(a)* major capital road works, *(b)* road maintenance and *(c)* minor capital road works in each of the financial years (i) 1988-89, (ii) 1989-90, (iii) 1990-91 and (iv) 1991-92 and the sums actually expended under each of those headings in those years; and if he will indicate any increases and decreases from the sums initially projected in each year and also any differences from the longer term estimates for those years.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is as follows:

£' thousand

	Major capital roadworks	*Increase/ decrease on main estimates*	*Road maintenance*	*Increase/ decrease on main estimates*	*Minor capital roadworks*	*Increase/ decrease on main estimates*
1988-89						
Main estimates	10,905	—	26,951	—	6,330	—
Spring supplementary estimates	13,830	+2,925	32,168	+5,217	6,535	+205
Outturn	12,159	+1,254	34,571	+7,620	7,303	+973
1989-90						
Main estimates	18,365	—	40,415	—	7,050	—
Spring supplementary estimates	17,849	−516	41,200	+785	7,100	+50
Outturn	16,315	−2,050	41,584	+1,169	8,624	−1,574

	Major capital roadworks	Increase/ decrease on main estimates	Road maintenance	Increase/ decrease on main estimates	Minor capital roadworks	Increase/ decrease on main estimates
1990-91						
Main estimates	16,560	—	43,180	—	9,030	—
Spring supplementary estimates	16,560	—	44,394	+1,214	9,030	—
Outturn	16,046	−1,514	45,936	+2,756	9,612	+582
1991-92						
Main estimates	18,730	—	42,151	—	8,502	—
Spring supplementary estimates	20,382	−1,652	41,250	−901	8,002	−500
Outturn	19,892	+1,162	40,277	−1,874	7,910	−592

Note:—Long term planning figures are subject to annual refinement before inclusion in the Estimates booklets.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Road Schemes

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the major capital road schemes programmed *(a)* in 1988 for the years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 and *(b)* in 1990 for the years 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94; and if he will indicate the cost of each scheme.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is as follows:

Major capital road schemes programmed in 1988
£ million at 1988 prices

Financial year and proposed schemes	Total estimated cost
1988-89	
A26 Antrim/Ballymena Dualling: Stage 1	3·8
A57/B101 Oldstone Road	0·7
Eastlink Dundonald	0·5
Longwood Road, Newtownabbey	0·5
Castlecourt, Belfast	1·5
Buncrana Road, Londonderry	0·3
Banbridge By-pass Dualling	1·3
Newry 8A (Canal Street/Downshire Road Link)	1·0
Balloo Road, Bangor: Stage 2	0·8
Omagh Through-pass: Stage 1	3·7
1989-90	
Frederick Street, Belfast	1·5
Greenmount Link Roundabout, Coleraine	0·2
Crossnadonnell Limavady	0·4
Strand Road, Londonderry	0·2
Culmore Road, Londonderry	0·3
Bridge Street/Tavanagh Avenue, Portadown	0·4
Dunmurry By-pass: Stage 2C	1·8
A48 Donaghadee Road, Newtownards	0·4
T4 Hillsborough By-pass junction	0·4
Strabane By-pass: Stage 1	2·6
Church Street/Scotch Street, Downpatrick	0·6
1990-91	
Castledawson By-pass	2·5
Belfast schemes arising from Belfast Urban area plan	3·0
Greemount Link: Stages 3 and 4 Coleraine	0·4
Bushmills Road, Coleraine	0·5
T4 Mullan's Corner Dualling	1·3
Dunmurry By-pass Stage 2D	1·7
Enniskillen Through-pass Stage 3B	1·0
High Street/Hamilton Road, Bangor	0·5
1991-92	
Killead By-pass	1·2
A26 Antrim/Ballymena Dualling Stage 2	2·6
Belfast schemes arising from Belfast Urban area plan	3·0
Strand Road, Londonderry: Stage 2	0·6
Newry By-pass: Stage 2	2·5
North Road/Talbot Street, Newtownards	0·3
Comber By-pass Stage 2	1·0

Major capital road schemes programmed in 1990
£ million at 1990 prices

Financial year and proposed schemes	Total estimated cost
1990-91	
T8 Castledown By-pass	3·1
Ballymaconaghy Road, Belfast: Phase 1	0·1
Purdysburn Road, Belfast	0·8
Ballymaconaghy Road, Belfast: Phase 2	0·6
Castlereagh Roundabout, Belfast	0·6
Jordanstown Road, Belfast	0·2
Greenmount Link, Coleraine: Stage 5	0·6
Bushmills Road, Coleraine	0·7
Queen's Quay Repairs Londonderry	0·2
A48 Donaghadee Road, Newtownards	1·0
Dunmurry By-pass: Stage 2D	2·8
Strabane By-pass: Stage 1 (bridge)	1·0
T3 Strategy	0·3
1991-92	
Killed By-pass	1·5
M2 Crosskennan Slip Roads	0·6
Great Victoria Street/Sandy Row, Belfast	1·5
Forester Green Junction, Belfast	0·9
Queen's Quay, Londonderry	2·0
T4 Mullan's Corner Dualling	1·8
Church Street/Scotch Street, Downpartick	1·0
High Street/Hamilton Road, Bangor	1·3
Balloo Road, Bangor: Stage 3	0·3
Strabane By-pass: Stage 1 (Roadworks)	2·1
T3 Strategy	0·3
1993-94	
A26 Antrim/Ballymena Dualling: Stage 2	3·1
A2 Shore Road, Belfast	4·1
Purdysburn Road, Belfast: Stage 2	0·8
Knock Road, Belfast: Stage 1	5·6
Strand Road, Londonderry: Stage 2	1·0
Newry By-pass: Stage 3 (Roadworks)	3·9
A29 Carland Bridge, Dungannon	1·5
T3 Strategy	0·3

Civil Servants

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the number of civil servants in the Northern Ireland Office, *(a)* in Belfast and *(b)* in London, indicating in each case how many are of Northern Ireland origin and how many of Great Britain origin.

Mr. Mates: As at 1 April 1992 there were 106 staff working in London and 1,435 in Northern Ireland. The information on origin is not held by the Northern Ireland Office.

Airports Authority

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he requested the board of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company Ltd. to reconsider its new nominee for the chairmanship of the Northern Ireland Airports Authority Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I wrote to the chairman of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company on 1 June, asking to be reassured that the board had been able to cast its net sufficiently widely before a decision was taken on approval of any appointment as chairman. I also asked if the board would be prepared to make at least three names available for consideration.

EMPLOYMENT

Youth Unemployment

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons under the age of 21 are unemployed in the Morpeth-Northumberland travel-to-work area at the most recent date.

Mr. McLoughlin: Unemployment figures by age and duration are available on a quarterly basis, but only for standard age bands. In April 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 695 claimant unemployed persons aged under 20 in the Morpeth and Ashington travel-to-work area.

Long-term Unemployment

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment she has made of the impact of Government policies on long-term unemployment.

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment she has made of the impact of Government policies on long-term unemployment.

Mr. McLoughlin: We are firmly committed to helping long-term unemployed people get back to work. We have in place a wider than ever range of measures to help unemployed people, including the long-term unemployed, find jobs as quickly as possible. These measures are part of a coherent package of policies which are setting a sound economic framework for sustainable non-inflationary growth.

Local Office, Newport

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she will instruct the manager of the Newport, Gwent, unemployment benefit office to report how many unemployed people were disqualified for unemployment benefit and for what periods, under each paragraph of section 20(1) of the Social Security Act 1975, in the area covered by that office in the week commencing 15 June; and if she will place this information in the Library.

Mr. McLoughlin: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service agency are the responsibility of the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

ENVIRONMENT

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to improve the monitoring of sites of special scientific interest.

Mr. Maclean: In England the responsibility for monitoring individual sites of special scientific interest lies with English Nature which is giving particular attention to improving its performance in this area. For example in 1991-92 some 51 per cent. of SSSIs in England received site integrity monitoring involving a basic check on whether major loss or damage has occurred. English Nature is also developing its existing system of site quality monitoring which surveys a sample of SSSIs for its detailed scientific value each year.

Greenhouse Gases

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to develop and implement a United Kingdom plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural processes.

Mr. Maclean: The Government intend to consider the scope for limiting greenhouse gas emissions from all sources, including the agricultural sector, in drawing up their national programme under the framework convention on climate change.

Methane

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what efforts are currently being undertaken by his Department to improve the maintenance of oil and natural gas production systems as a means of reducing methane leakage.

Mr. Maclean: My Department is participating in a study led by the Department of Trade and Industry aimed at improving knowledge of methane emissions from all sources, including oil and natural gas production.

Social Housing

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department will take to counteract the recent Audit Commission's optimistic forecast of a shortfall of 12,000 social lettings each year; and if he will comment on the report.

Mr. Baldry: The Audit Commission's report "Developing Local Authority Housing Strategies", including the discussion of supply and demand for social housing, is a useful contribution to public debate on housing policy. Besides the recommendations addressed to central Government, which we shall consider carefully, the report contains many recommendations for local authorities on how they could make more effective use of their existing stock of housing and other resources.

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the Audit Commissioner's report on the shortfall of 12,000 homes per year; and what effect this has on waiting lists.

Mr. Baldry: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave today to the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr.

Evans). Local authorities' practices in maintaining waiting lists for council housing vary widely, and they are therefore not an accurate indicator of unmet need for social housing.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate the cost to Easington district council of collecting the community charge 1991-92 and the estimated costs involved to Easington council in collecting the council tax.

Mr. Robin Squire: The cost in 1991-92 to Easington district council of collecting the community charge was £696,000. No estimate is available of the cost of collecting the council tax.

Water Extraction

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the National Rivers Authority in respect of limiting new, and renewing, licences for water extraction by non-domestic users; and what was the result of those discussions.

Mr. Maclean: It is for the NRA to consider applications on their merits in the light of the authority's general duty to take steps to conserve, redistribute or otherwise augment water resources in England and Wales, and to secure their proper use.

City Challenge

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects to make announcements on the second wave of city challenge bids.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 20 May, *Official Report*, column *148*.

Council Tax (Valulation List)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce regulations that would prevent a person from making copies of the council tax valuation list for a purpose not associated with an appeal with respect to a valuation.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have made it quite clear that valuation lists will not be made available to commercial organisations. Valuation lists are, however, public documents and it would be wrong to restrict interested parties' rights to obtain information from them.

Radiation Monitoring

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans there are for local authorities to have access to the Government radiation incident monitoring network.

Mr. Maclean: Under current arrangements lead local authorities have electronic mail access to RIMNET information bulletins and data summaries. Under the next phase of the RIMNET project, due for completion later this year, it will be possible for more local authorities, with the necessary expertise, to enter radiological measurements and receive information and data summaries over public data network and electronic mail links.

Local Authority Land Sales

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the total assets by local authority which local authorities have raised from the sale of open land and playing fields in the last two years.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is not available. However, returns to the Department from local authorities give information on sales of fixed assets in the service categories "parks and open spaces" and "other outside sports and playing fields". I have arranged for the data for the latest available years to be placed in the Library of the House.

Council House Sales

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has available to him concerning the current level of service charges payable to local authorities in respect of flats purchased by sitting tenants under the right-to-buy legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Department does not collect this information from local authorities. The protections against unreasonable service charges in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 apply to all leaseholders, including those who bought under the right to buy. In addition, purchasers of flats under the right to buy are given pre-sale estimates of service charges covering the first five years of the lease, and cannot be charged more than the amounts estimated for repairs and improvements.

Water Charges

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of the Office of Water Supply in affecting water companies' charges.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Harvey) on 19 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *73*.

Orimulsion

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects Her Majesty' inspectorate of pollution to make a decision with regard to the burning of orimulsion at Padiham power station.

Mr. Maclean: National Power has agreed to a request from HMIP for an extension of the determination period for this application to 30 September. Unless further extensions are required, the authorisation will be issued by this date.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secetary of State for the Environment if he will list the companies who have applied to use orimulsion fuel on a commercial basis; and if he will show in his answer those which have been *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused permission.

Mr. Maclean: National Power has applied under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to HMIP to burn

orimulsion in its power stations at Pembroke in Wales and Padiham in Lancashire. Both applications are currently being considered.

PowerGen has permission under previous legislation to burn limited amounts of orimulsion in its power stations at Ince in Cheshire and at Richborough in Kent. The company has applied to burn orimulsion in these stations under the 1990 Act. These applications are the subject of an appeal to my right hon. and learned Friend about commercial confidentiality. They cannot be determined until after the appeal decision, which will be made as soon as possible.

Maiden Down Common

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in respect of the mass protest walk held on Maiden Down common, east Cornwall in April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: We have not received any representations in respect of a mass protest walk on Maiden Down common, east Devon, in April.

Homelessness

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homeless people in the Easington district council area are aged *(a)* 17 and 18 years, *(b)* 18 and 19 years, *(c)* 19 years, *(d)* 20 years and *(e)* 20 and 21 years; and what extra resources are being made available to Easington district council to tackle the problem.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities report the number of households for whom they accept responsibility to secure permanent accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1985 in their quarterly P1(E) return. The quarterly P1(E) returns identify such households by the category of need but not by age. The total number of all households accepted by Easington under these provisions in the fourth quarter of 1991 was 27.

In the second quarter of this year the return was revised to identify for the first time:

(i) households in priority need who were accepted as homeless because the household contained vulnerable young person(s) (aged 16 and over) and,

(b) young single homeless people who were not in priority need for whom the authority nevertheless agreed to secure permanent accommodation.

Since then, Easington has reported accepting only one such household, in the first of these two categories during the second quarter of 1991.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the number of families accepted as homeless for each housing authority area in England in *(a)* 1978-79 and *(b)* 1991-92.

Mr. Baldry: Information on homeless households for whom local authorities have accepted responsibility to secure accommodation under the provisions of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and part III of the Housing act 1985 is reported quarterly to the Department —half-yearly before 1984.

The available information can be found in the following publications:

"Local Housing Statistics: England and Wales", Edition No. 52 (Table 12), acceptance figures for both halves of 1978.

"Households found accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the first quarter 1991. Supplementary Tables" (Table 7), number of acceptances in the first quarter 1991.

"Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act. Supplementary Table", acceptances in the second, third and fourth quarters of 1991.

From the second quarter of 1991 the definition of acceptances was altered to exclude intentionally homeless and the guidance to local authorities on completion of their returns was expanded. The acceptance figures for quarters 2, 3 and 4 of 1991 are not therefore strictly comparable with those for quarter 1, 1991 and earlier years.

Copies are in the Library.

Hedgerows

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many miles of hedgerow have been planted in the northern region for the years 1989-90 and 1990-91; and at what cost in grants.

Mr. Maclean: Information is not available in this form. however, grants for the planting of hedgerows are available from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Countryside Commission as part of their wider grant schemes.

Environmental Impact Assessments

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ensure that environmental impact assessments take social and economic costs and benefits of projects into account.

Mr. Maclean: Where a project which is the subject of a planning application requires environmental assessment, the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 provide that the environmental statement submitted by the applicant shall include a description of the likely significant effects on the environment. These include the impact on human beings as well as on flora, fauna, water, air and the landscape, and beneficial effects as well as adverse effects.

In deciding whether to grant consent the decision-taking authority must have regard to the environmental information—that is, the applicant's environmental statement and any comments on it from the statutory consultees and the general public—and also to any other material considerations.

Similar provisions apply where environmental assessment is required for projects which are subject to other approval procedures, for example, under the Highways and Electricity Acts.

United Nations

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to support the production of an annual statement on the environment by the United Nations.

Mr. Maclean: The United Nations Environment Programme already issues an annual report on the state of the world environment. The Government fully support the production of this informative document.

International Meetings

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to encourage the full participation of non-governmental organisations in international environmental meetings.

Mr. Maclean: It is already our policy to encourage participation of non-governmental organisations in international environmental meetings. For instance the United Kingdom's delegation to the Earth summit includes representatives of environment and development groups, industry, youth, trades unions, local government and scientists.

Global Environment Facility

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the level of financial contribution granted by his Department to the global environment facility.

Mr. Maclean: None.

Earth Summit

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the specific roles of each Minister in his Department in the preparatory meetings leading up to the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development conference.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and previous Secretaries of State as well as other Ministers in this Department have been involved in the negotiations made at each stage of the process leading up to the UN Conference on Environment and Development. My right hon. Friend, the then Secretary of State for the Environment, attended a preparatory meeting in New York in March. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I attended UNCED in Rio.

Sheep Dip

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research has been carried out into the entry of organophosphates into the water table, as a result of their use in sheep dips.

Mr. Maclean: The National Rivers Authority, in conjunction with regulatory bodies in Scotland and Northern Ireland, has recently completed a research programme on the extent of pollution caused by disposal of spent sheep dip to soakaway. A report is expected shortly which will outline the findings and recommend appropriate disposal practices.

Nitrous Oxide Emissions

Mrs. Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the increase in nitrous dioxide emissions in the past five years in London; and whether there will be official Government warnings issued or advice proffered to Londoners to minimise health risks.

Mr. Maclean: Total United Kingdom emissions of oxides of nitrogen from motor vehicles—the principal source—are estimated to have risen by 38 per cent. between 1986 and 1991. The increase is likely to have been similar in the London area. Advice on the health implications of episodes of high nitrogen dioxide concentrations is available on a free telephone line—0800 556677—and from general practitioners. Daily air quality bulletins and forecasts are available on the same telephone line, on Ceefax and in some newspapers.

Mineral Planning Guidance

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has yet decided whether there is a need to revise mineral planning guidance 3 following the recent consultation.

Mr Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 2 June, *Official Report*, column *377*.

Mortgages

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about his meeting with representatives of mortgage lenders on 2 June and the information they provided him with about the underlying position with respect to arrears and possessions.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 4 June, at column *611*.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice his Department has issued to owners of domestic appliances which contain chlorofluorocarbons who wish to ensure that chlorofluorocarbons are not released into the atmosphere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: On 21 May, I launched a leaflet on CFCs, entitled "You and the Ozone Layer", which advises consumers about products which may contain CFCs or other ozone-depleting substances. The leaflet also gives information about the safe disposal of domestic appliances, such as fridges and freezers, urges owners to ensure that the CFC coolant will be safely removed for recycling and advises owners who are having their fridges or freezers serviced to check that the service engineer is trained to handle the coolant, and is prepared to send any coolant that is removed for recycling.

Halons

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the use of halons 1211 and 1301 in fire-fighting equipment will be banned; and if he will make a statement on their use.

Mr. Maclean: The UK's policy is to control the production and supply of halons rather than their use. We are pressing for a phase-out of halons by the end of 1995 internationally, and the end of 1994 in the EC. Users who will still need halons after the phase-out of production and supply should consider now how they will meet these needs. The Government are working closely with users and the fire industry to see what might be done to facilitate halon recycling and banking.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further information he has made available to local authorities about standard spending assessments.

Mr. Robin Squire: A publication "Standard Spending Assessment Handbook 1992/93" has been produced to provide details of the standard spending assessment of each local authority. Copies of the publication have today been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. Copies are also being sent to every local authority in England and to the local authority associations.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average length of time for appeals to be heard against uniform business rates in *(a)* south Cumbria and *(b)* the rest of England and Wales.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information is not available centrally on the time taken to deal with non-domestic rating appeals.

Following revaluation on 1 April 1990, tribunals in England initially received some 600,000 appeals, including transitional cases. Most of these were received by tribunals towards the end of that financial year. By the end of March 1992 about 220,000 appeals had been resolved.

Cumbria valuation tribunal initially received about 7,800 appeals and by the end of March 1992 some 4,200 had been resolved.

"Pollution and Waste Management"

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the planning policy guidance, "Pollution and Waste Management".

Sir George Young: On Tuesday this week, my right hon. and learned Friend published for public consultation a new draft planning policy guidance note on planning and pollution control, which fulfils a commitment in the environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance". We also published the results of a research study, commissioned to inform in the preparation of the draft PPG. My right hon. and learned Friend expects to issue the final version of the PPG, in the light of responses to the consultation draft, later this year.

Ozone Layer

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what efforts have been made by his Department to encourage other countries to implement the revised Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer since June 1990.

Mr. Maclean: The Government took a leading role in the negotiations to revise the Montreal protocol in 1990, including the provisions for funding and technology transfer for developing countries which are designed to encourage maximum participation. We are fully committed to providing our contribution to the funding mechanism, and have also made considerable diplomatic efforts to encourage other countries to ratify the protocol. We also played an active role in negotiating the EC regulation which ensures the implementation of the revised protocol throughout the Community.

Renewable Energy Systems

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action will be taken by his Department to accelerate the development and adoption of solar and other low-impact renewable energy systems and more efficient energy storage devices.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

My Department has a wide-ranging programme to support the development, promotion and commercialisation of renewable energy in the United Kingdom, including solar energy. This includes a technical programme covering R and D, demonstration and technology transfer (costing £24·3 million in 1992-93) and action, under the Electricity Act 1989, setting non-fossil fuel obligation orders to provide a premium market for electricity-generating renewables in England and Wales.

There is a continuing dialogue with industry on the development of advanced battery technology. A project on superconducting magnetic energy storage, with an estimated total cost of around £1 million, is currently being considered for support by the Department.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Footpaths

Ms. Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what account he intends his Department to take of the needs of disabled people who are currently denied access to footpaths on account of their construction.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

Access to public footpaths is primarily the responsibility of local highway authorities. However, as part of its "Enjoying the Countryside: Policies for People" initiative, the Countryside Commission is commissioning an advisory service for its own regional office staff on how to open up the countryside to the disabled; it is also revising its advisory booklet "Informal Countryside Recreation for Disabled People".

SOCIAL SECURITY

Resettlement

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what criteria his Department uses to approve closure of resettlement units; and which of the remaining 15 are currently being considered for replacement.

Miss Widdecombe: The management of the Resettlement Agency, and the development of replacement proposals for resettlement units is a matter for Mr. Tony Ward, the chief executive, although no unit is closed unless Ministers are satisfied with replacement proposals. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Tony Graham

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will set out for the case of Mr. Tony Graham, Christopher court, Hemel Hampstead, reference BS/M2/39342, the date on which his war pension increase was awarded by the tribunal and the date on which payment of the arrears and continuing increase were made.

Miss Widdecombe: The payment of war pensions is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Disability Benefits

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which benefits for people with disabilities are denied to anyone over 65 years of age.

Mr. Scott: Disability living allowance (DLA) may be claimed up to a person's 66th birthday, providing that the disability occurred before his or her 65th birthday. There is no upper age limit for receipt: once awarded, the benefit may remain payable indefinitely. Attendance allowance is available to people becoming disabled after age 65, or claiming after age 66.

The provisions of the following benefits change at ages 60 or 65 for women and ages 65 or 70 for men, to take account of the ending of an individual's liability to pay national insurance contributions and the availability of retirement pension.

On sickness and invalidity benefits, from age 60 for women and age 65 for men the standard rates of benefit are replaced by the rate at which retirement pension would be payable—abated by 5 per cent. in the case of sickness benefit. The upper age limit for receipt of benefit is 64 for women and 69 for men.

On severe disablement allowance, the upper age limit for claims is 59 for women and 64 for men, although currently women aged 60-64 are also able to claim as a result of a decision by the Court of Appeal. Once awarded, benefit is payable for life if the qualifying conditions continue to be satisfied up to age 65 for women or age 70 for men.

On industrial injuries benefits, from age 60 for women and age 65 for men, people who are receiving reduced earnings allowance and who give up regular employment are paid retirement allowance. Retirement allowance is payable for life.

On war pensions, the upper age limit for qualifying for unemployability supplement and allowance for lowered standard of occupation is 59 for women and 64 for men. Once entitlement has been established, however, both can continue for life.

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants of *(a)* income support, *(b)* housing benefit and *(c)* community charge benefit, were in receipt of severe disability premium as of 31 March.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not avaiable.

Distribution of Wealth

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the impact of Government policies on the economic well-being of the poorest decile of the income distribution.

Mr. Burt: We continue to monitor the effectiveness of the social security system, as we have done since introducing the major reforms of 1988.

National Insurance Cards

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many plastic national insurance number cards have been issued; and how much each national insurance number card costs.

Miss Widdecombe: The issue of plastic national insurance number cards is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive of the Contributions Agency. She will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Maxwell Pensioners

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) who will administer his temporary Maxwell pensioner rescue package;

(2) what information he has on the numbers of pensioners who could be assisted, and the amount to which they could be assisted, by his temporary Maxwell pensioner rescue package;

(3) what guidelines he will be giving to the administrators of his temporary Maxwell pensioner rescue package as to *(a)* the circumstances in which payments should be made and *(b)* the levels to be paid;

(4) if he will publish a telephone number where advice on claiming grants under his Maxwell pensioners emergency package can be obtained;

(5) when the first payments under his Maxwell pensioners emergency package will be made.

Miss Widdecombe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 8 June the setting up of a special unit within the Department of Social Security and the establishment of a trust. Individual pensioners need take no action as funds will be made available directly to the independent trustees. Those funds are intended to assist Maxwell schemes that find themselves in difficulties. Funds will be used to protect the pensions of Headington pension scheme members, including the payment for May, to assist schemes that are unable to continue full payment of pensions and to allow schemes to commence payment of pensions to recently retired pensioners. Discussions have already been held with the independent trustees of the Headington pension scheme and we expect the first payments to be made soon.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assumptions about the duration of disqualification for unemployment benefit were made in estimating the cost of reducing the maximum to six weeks, for the purpose of replying to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 21 January, *Official Report*, column *180*; and on what evidence these assumptions were based.

Mr. Burt: The estimate was based upon the actual number of disqualifications in force on 9 May 1991 and an assumption that around two thirds of those disqualified would still be unemployed and disqualified after six weeks. The average length on the unemployment register by claimants disqualified for receiving unemployment benefit has been assumed to be 11 weeks, based upon current unemployment benefit statistics. This is less than the 21-week average period of disqualification—one of the

findings of a departmental survey published in 1989 entitled "An Analysis of Voluntary Unemployed Claimants", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Leaflet FB31

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will publish the letter sent to Mr. Martin Baillie of the Islington welfare rights unit in reply to his letter of 9 January to the chief executive of the Benefits Agency concerning leaflet FB31.

Mr. Burt: The handling of correspondence from the Benefits Agency is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member regarding the publication of the letter and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Social Fund

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total expenditure on discretionary grants and loans, respectively, from the social fund for each month in 1991-92: and what are the monthly equivalents of the amounts allocated for such expenditure in 1992-93.

Mr. Scott: Separate monthly allocations are not made within the financial year. Information concerning discretionary social fund expenditure for each month in 1991-92 is in the Library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Lobster Fisheries

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to amend the Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Act 1967, particularly concerning the creation of enhanced lobster fisheries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Officials from the Department have held discussions with fishing industry representatives in England and Wales about the possibility of extending the power to grant several and regulating orders so as to cover crustacean species in addition to the molluscan species already covered. In the light of the views expressed, I intend to introduce legislation to this affect when the opportunity arises.

Broiler Chickens

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his response to the Farm Animal Welfare Council's report on the welfare of broiler chickens.

Mr. Soames: The Government welcome this report. We will be consulting interested organisations on it shortly and will issue a response when all the comments have been carefully considered.

Farm Waste Management

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his proposed pilot study on farm waste management plans.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have decided that a pilot study should be undertaken to see if pollution could be cut by farmers drawing up tailor-made plans for disposing of manure, slurry and other organic wastes on their holdings. These plans will advise when, where and in what quantities farmers should spread wastes in order to avoid water pollution and get the most benefit from the nutrients in them. The areas we have chosen for the study comprise parts of the following river catchments: the River Weaver in Cheshire; the River Frome in Somerset; the River Clyst in Devon; and the Afon Ceri in Wales.

The catchments were chosen, following consultation with the National Rivers Authority, to represent typical dairy farming areas.

The National Farmers Union, the Country Landowners Association and the Farmers Union of Wales have indicated their full support for this pilot study and their wish that as many farmers as possible will agree to participate in it.

Agricultural Development Advisory Service project officers nominated for each catchment will be contacting some 100 or so farmers in each of the areas concerned to ask them to take part in the pilot study. They will be available to help farmers involved in the study.

We very much hope that this study will be a great success and that it will prove of direct benefit to those farmers in the selected areas who will end up with a free farm waste plan to consultancy standard. It will benefit both farmers and the community generally by providing an assessment of the possible future value of farm waste plans. This development underlines our commitment to protecting the environment.

Aquatic Environment

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the responsibilities and duties of his Department and agencies which report to his Department in relation to inshore waters, intertidal areas and maritime land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the Government's memorandum on this subject which was submitted to the Environment Committee of this House in the last Session. It has now been published by HMSO as part of the Environment Committee's report on coastal zone protection and planning, volume II, minutes of evidence and appendices.

Chernobyl

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his current estimate of when there will be no restriction on the movement of farm animals arising from radioactive contamination following the Chernobyl disaster.

Mr. Curry: It is not possible to be precise about the length of time that post-Chernobyl restrictions will have to remain in place. However, only 138 holdings remain under restriction in Cumbria. This represents a reduction of over 90 per cent. in the number of holdings originally restricted. We hope to be able to identify further holdings for derestriction this year.

We shall continue our monitoring and research efforts to enable all restrictions to be lifted as soon as possible, consistent with the need to ensure the continued protection of the food chain.

Eggs (Marketing)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence he has of any circumstances under which the egg marketing regulations are regularly breached.

Mr. Curry: The egg marketing regulations are strictly enforced and where necessary prosecutions are taken. There were four prosecutions in England by my Department in 1991-92.

Nematodes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the extent of anthelmintic resistant nematodes in farm animals.

Mr. Soames: A commercially sponsored survey in 1990 by the central veterinary laboratory covering three southern English counties demonstrated the presence of anthelmintic-resistant nematodes in sheep and goats. The central veterinary laboratory is to carry out a Government-funded survey this year to determine the extent of the condition.

Whales

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the Government will support a total and permanent ban on commercial whaling at the International Whaling Commission meeting in Glasgow and back a proposal to declare Antarctic waters a whale sanctuary.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 8 June 1992 to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Mr. Walley), *Official Report*, column *11*.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to seek a ban on whaling in EC waters and by EC nationals.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 4 June 1992 to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), *Official Report*, column *642*.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many animal welfare inspections were made by state veterinary officers in each year since 1985.

Mr. Soames: The figures record the number of welfare inspections carried out on farms by the State Veterinary Service. They do not include the visits made to farms for other purposes when welfare will have been monitored.

	Number
1985	6,064
1986	5,804
1987	5,219
1988	5,670
1989	3,902
1990	4,168
1991	4,584

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's arrangements for consulting the Data Protection Registrar during the planning stage of any initiative involving the collection, use or disclosure of personal data; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Officials maintain regular contact with the Office of the Data Protection Registrar about proposals for legislation which may be sensitive in the area of personal data, and the effectiveness of the arrangements is kept under review.

EC Presidency

Mr. McFall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are his Department's current priorities for the United Kingdom presidency of the Community.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on 4 June, column *936*.

Battery Hens

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to support the abolition of battery hens; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Proposals for revised welfare standards for egg-laying hens are expected to be published by the EC Commission later this year. In the negotiations, the Government will be pressing for major improvements in the welfare standards for laying hens in all systems of production.

Set-aside

Mr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the conditions beneficial to the environment which will be placed on farmers who will enter into the set-aside scheme agreed in the common agricultural policy reform package in May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Environmental conditions are a vital element of the new set-aside arrangements. They will be drawn up as soon as the detailed Commission implementing regulations have been agreed. I appreciate that this will not leave as much time as I would have liked to consult on and implement the new conditions before the start of the first set-aside period and there may have to be some flexibility in this first year. More detailed measures may then be necessary for the second and subsequent years, when farmers will be in a position to decide between rotational and non-rotational set-aside.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 8 June, *Official Report*, column *14*, on bovine spongiform encephalopathy, if he will give the terms of reference of the committee chaired by Dr. Tyrrell.

Mr. Gummer: The terms of reference of the spongiform encephalopathy advisory committee are to advise the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Health on matters related to spongiform encephalopathies.

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about his response to the milk marketing board's plans for reform.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 8 June, *Official Report*, column *12*.

Clenbuterol

Mr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will ask the Veterinary Products Committee to conduct a full review of clenbuterol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: No. The Veterinary Products Committee is already reviewing licensed veterinary products containing clenbuterol to ensure they meet up-to-date standards of safety, quality and efficacy as part of its current review of veterinary pharmaceutical product licences.

Mr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on 22 May, *Official Report*, column *322*, when he expects to complete his review of licences for clenbuterol; what evidence is being used for this review; whether he will make this evidence public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: It is not possible to estimate when the review of licensed veterinary medicinal products containing clenbuterol will have been completed. Licence holders are required to provide such evidence as is necessary to satisfy the Veterinary Products Committee that the products meet up-to-date standards of safety, quality and efficacy. Under the terms of section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968, the licensing authority cannot publish this information on grounds of commercial confidentiality.

DEFENCE

Defence Lands

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide tables for the United Kingdom, for England and Wales, for Scotland and for Northern Ireland of *(a)* the number of defence forces based there, *(b)* the area of defence lands, *(c)* the area of defence lands acquired and *(d)* the area of defence lands released for each year since 1962.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many miles of new permissive footpaths have been opened up over defence lands since 1974.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Records of permissive footpaths are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total area of defence lands contaminated with mines, unexploded bombs and ammunition which have been cleared in each year since 1974; and when it is expected all lands not now used for live firing will be cleared.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The area of land cleared each year since 1974-75 is as follows:

Financial Year	*Area Cleared (hectares)*
1974-75	1,232
1975-76	1,220
1976-77	2,042
1977-78	1,905
1978-79	1,526
1979-80	1,993
1980-81	1,909
1981-82	1,923
1982-83	1,250
1983-84	1,138
1984-85	2,173
1985-86	1,586
1986-87	1,825
1987-88	1,384
1988-89	936
1989-90	2,272
1990-91	1,599
1991-92	1,183

On current plans, work will continue into the next century.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many foreign troops have used United Kingdom defence lands for training exercises other than in small numbers training alongside United Kingdom troops, in each year since 1974.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Training Sites

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the main sites used for training for United Kingdom troops outside the United Kingdom since 1974; and if he will list those for which future use is under review.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Under long-established arrangements, troops from the British Army currently train at various locations in the following countries outside the United Kingdom: Australia; Belize; Botswana; Brunei; Canada; Cyprus; Denmark; Falkland Islands; France; Germany; Gibraltar; Hong Kong; Hawaii; Italy; Jamaica; Jordan; Kenya; Malaysia; New Zealand; Norway; Oman; Portugal; Spain; Thailand; and the USA.

The precise date when training in each country commenced could only be made available at disproportionate cost.

The use of all training areas outside the United Kingdom is kept under regular review.

Exercise Allegiance Exchange

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the aims and objectives of the NATO exercise, Allegiance Exchange, due to commence on 6 June.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The purpose of the Allegiance Exchange exercise was to test and exercise the operational and logistic capabilities of the Allied Command Europe Mobile Force (AMF) northern contingent and allow NATO to demonstrate solidarity by the efficient deployment, employment and subsequent redeployment of the force.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by country, the number of *(a)* service personnel and *(b)* aircraft that will be taking part in the NATO exercise Allegiance Exchange commencing on 6 June.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The approximate number of service personnel and the number of aircraft which participated in the exercise Allegiance Exchange is listed by nation as follows:

	Service personnel (all ranks)	*Aircraft*
Belgium	203	4 F16, 1 Bell 206 helicopter
Germany	679	4 Alpha Jet, 8 UH1D helicopters
Italy	388	6 G91
Netherlands	109	4 F16
United Kingdom	1,506	4 Jaguar, 4 Puma helicopters, 6 Gazelle helicopters
United States	198	4 A10, 3 UH1D helicopters

Civil Fire Officers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list for the next 12 months the dates and venues of his Department's training courses laid on for civil fire officers;

(2) if he will list for the last 24 months the dates and venue of his Department's training courses laid on for civil fire officers; and if he will show by fire and civil defence authority those who were notified and the response obtained.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Aquatic Environment

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the responsibilities and duties of his Department and agencies which report to his Department in relation to inshore waters, intertidal areas and maritime land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the Government's memorandum on this subject which was submitted to the Select Committee on the Environment in the last session. It has now been published by HMSO as part of that Committee's report on coastal zone protection and planning, volume II, minutes of evidence and appendices.

Accommodation

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the cost evaluations arrived at in the course of his review into RAF MOD establishments for the provision of accommodation in the Harrogate area and at RAF Wyton and RAF Brampton.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The consultative document published on 4 June sets out the options considered and a summary of the economic appraisal. The detailed costings for each option contain information which is commercially or otherwise sensitive.

Coroner's Inquest

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to this answer of 3 June, *Official Report*, column *569*, what were the nature and contents of his recent brief discussion with Secretary Cheney about the recent verdict of the coroner's inquest.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend and Secretary Cheney discussed press reports that the chairman of the House armed services sub-committee on investigations was making preliminary inquiries to see if an investigation would be appropriate.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his answer of 3 June, *Official Report*, column *569*, how many changes he has made to his policy relating to the release of information since 6 May.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave on 3 June, *Official Report*, column *569*.

WE177 Replacement

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his answer of 20 May, *Official Report*, column *188*, whether he has used the different estimated development costs for a possible WE177 replacement to calculate an average estimated development cost for a possible WE177 replacement.

Mr. Aitken: No, Sir. Differences in estimated potential development costs are a result of differences betweeen the programmes on which they are based. An average of such figures would be meaningless.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his answer of 20 May, *Official Report*, column *188*, whether he has considered releasing an estimated development cost for a possible WE177 replacement which is sufficiently imprecise to avoid prejudicing his future negotiating position with potential suppliers.

Mr. Aitken: I have considered the hon. Member's suggestion, but the relatively large difference in cost between the options being evaluated means that any published estimates would be misleading.

Defence Estimate

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to change the contents of volume 2 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Following a review of the dissemination of defence statistics, it has been decided to

replace volume 2 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates with a similar publication called Defence Statistics. The new publication will in many cases provide a longer historical perspective as well as containing more up-to-date information. Some tables in volume 2 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates contained information that was of only specialist interest or was obtainable from other sources. These tables will be omitted from the new publication but the information they contain will either be published elsewhere or will be available on request from the Defence Statistical Organisation.

Courts Martial

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has sought or received from Commander in Chief, Fleet, about the court martial of Lieutenant-Commander Peter McDonnell; what consideration has been given to further action arising from the sinking of the Antares; what action is being taken on the information arising from the court martial concerning command of HMS Trenchant at the time of the sinking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Commander in Chief, Fleet has kept me fully informed of the reasons for and circumstances leading to the court martial of Lieutenant Commander Peter McDonnell. Both the verdict and the sentence are subject to review and Lieutenant Commander McDonnell has the right to appeal.

The Commander in Chief will also be fully reviewing the proceedings of the court martial to decide what further action, if any, might be appropriate.

Little Ferry Bomb

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the dropping of a target bomb by a United States air force plane. near Little Ferry, Sutherland on Thursday 4 June.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: On Thursday 4 June, a practice bomb was inadvertently released from a United States Air Force (USAF) F111 aircraft using RAF Tain range. The practice bomb fell into woods near Little Ferry causing a fire. The USAF is currently conducting an investigation to establish the cause of the incident.

Maintenance Group

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what performance targets have been set for the Maintenance Group defence support agency for the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Maintenance Group DSA's key management targets for 1992-93 cover four areas of activity: performance of the group; the use of resources; the development of management systems; and management initiatives.

The group's performance aims are to achieve at least 98 per cent. of the task which represents 75 per cent. of the group's activity to standard and on time. All operational support tasks will be performed to RAF or NATO standards.

The group's resources will be managed to keep within the agreed budget and efficiency measure savings amounting to 0·5 per cent. of the cash allocation will be made.

The group plans to install prototype management accounting systems at one of its units and in the headquarters by 31 March 1993. The management accounting system will be extended to the other seven basic level budgeting units by 31 March 1994. Asset registers will be installed at all the basic level budgeting units by 31 March 1993.

The Maintenance Group management initiatives will centre on the installation of formal quality systems and the development of a total quality approach to management. Planning including investment appraisals for the rationalisation of functions and estate will continue.

Hydrographic Office

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what performance targets have been set for the Hydrographic Office defence support agency for the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Chief of Fleet Support, acting as the owner of the agency on behalf of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence under the terms of the agency's framework document, has revised the key targets for this year and beyond. These reflect the continuing need to secure economies in defence spending and the progress already made by the agency towards meeting those targets set at the time of its launch as a DSA in April 1990 and since.

On quality of service, the chief executive is required to continue to ensure that all immediate dangers are promulgated by radio navigational warnings within 20 hours of the receipt of information. He is also required to improve the state of revision of Admiralty navigational charts so that at 1 April 1993 73 per cent. will have been published within the past 30 years and 68 per cent. will have been revised within the past 10 years. The chief executive is also required to deliver funded RN hydrographic and oceanographic programmes to agreed cost, time and quality standards.

As regards commercial sales, the existing target to increase the revenue from commercial sales by at least 13 per cent. over the first five years of the operation of the agency will remain in force.

As regards an overall efficiency target to which the above key targets and other targets in the agency's business plan will contribute, the assumption will be that the disciplines of the "next steps" approach and the additional freedoms and flexibilities which agencies receive will allow them to do better in terms of efficiency than the rest of the Department. The chief executive is, therefore, being required to achieve an efficiency target of 3·5 per cent.—this is 1 per cent. higher than the 1992-93 target set for the Department as a whole. Additionally, the chief executive will be required to operate within the net cash allocation, which assumes achievement of those targets, as provided by the Chief of Fleet Support under the terms of his role as the agency's owner. Key targets were set at the time of the launch in April 1990 regarding the development of an improved management information and management accounting system. The implementation of the target in respect of the financial and management accounting information system will be completed early in 1992-93 and the target for the installation of a fully integrated IT-supported management information system by 1 April 1994 remains in force.

Meteorological Office

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what performance targets have been set for the Meteorological Office executive agency for the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The agency has been set a range of targets to ensure that it delivers progressive improvements in the quality and efficiency of weather-related services it provides to defence, civil aviation, commercial customers and the general public.

The targets set for the Meteorological Office during the period 1992-93 are to: achieve high standards of quality of service for each of the major groupings of customer; reduce net operating costs to £36·2 million—this being more than a 5 per cent. reduction on the 1991-92 forecast —increase efficiency by 3 per cent. through improvements in quality of service, increased service volumes and reduced unit costs; achieve a 9 per cent. increase in uptake of meteorological services to £16·5 million, as measured by cash revenue generated from commercial services to the public, industry and commerce, excluding CAA; achieve an 11 per cent. increase to £5·9 million in the gross contribution of commercial services invoiced revenue to offsetting core costs and overheads; and provide authoritative advice on climate change issues to Ministers and the general public, in particular to provide the most up-to-date assessment for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Performance against key targets is published in the Meteorological Office annual report and accounts, a copy of which is placed in the House of Commons Library.

SCOTLAND

Crime

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the current state of crime and offences in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Details of the numbers of crimes and offences recorded in Scotland in 1991 are contained in the Scottish Office statistical bulletin "Recorded Crime in Scotland, 1991", published on 22 May 1992, a copy of which was placed in the Library. I am naturally disappointed that recorded crime continues to rise, but part of the reason for this is that the public are reporting more crimes to the police. I welcome this, as we all have a part to play in the fight against crime.

Urban Aid

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether police authorities are eligible to apply for *(a)* capital and *(b)* recurring finance for community projects within areas of priority treatment through the urban aid programme; what precedents have been set for such projects; what criteria he uses to assess such applications; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Following a review of the urban programme, revised eligibility and priority criteria under which financial support can be given were published on 20 February 1992. Police authorities are eligible to apply for capital and current funding under the urban programme. Projects that supplement main programmes and other provisions under statutory obligations, or duplicate programmes of other agencies, will be ineligible.

Rented Housing

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing how many new houses for rent were constructed by *(a)* district councils, *(b)* Scottish Homes, or its predecessor and *(c)* housing associations in each year since 1970; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Table 5 in the statistical bulletin HSG/1992/2, "Housing Trends in Scotland—

Quarter ended 30 September 1991", gives the number of new dwellings completed by *(a)* district councils, *(b)* Scottish Homes or its predecessor and *(c)* housing associations for each year from 1979 to 1990, the latest year for which estimates are available. Statistics for the period up to 1979 were published in "Scottish Housing Statistics". Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Adult Illiteracy

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what figures are available for adult illiteracy in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

There is no standard definition of adult literacy and it is therefore difficult to collect comprehensive information. The Scottish Community Education Council was funded by the Scottish Office in 1990 to undertake a small-scale study of literacy and numeracy issues which indicated that 9 per cent. of a sample of adults had difficulties with either reading, writing or numeracy.

The Government give high priority to basic skills education for adults. Local authorities are currently the main providers but the Scottish Office Education Department also gives support by way of grant to organisations such as the Scottish Community Education Council as well as supporting local initiatives such as the Number Shop, the Whitfield adult basic education trust in Dundee and the Upper Nithsdale adult basic education project in Sanquhar. Support was also given earlier this year to adult learners' week.

The Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992 strengthens the position on basic skills by conferring on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State a duty in securing the provision of further education to have regard to the requirements of persons over school age who have learning difficulties.

Rents

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the average weekly rent charge for *(a)* local authority housing stock by each district council and *(b)* Scottish Homes stock for the financial year 1992-93.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is shown in the table.

Average weekly rent for Scottish local authorities and Scottish homes—1992-93

	£
Berwickshire	22·46
Ettrick and Lauderdale	19·51
Roxburgh	26·27
Tweeddale	19·75
Clackmannan	24·69
Falkirk	21·21
Stirling	25·10
Annandale and Eskdale	25·97
Nithsdale	23·72
Stewartry	27·00
Wigtown	27·33
Dunfermline	22·84
Kirkcaldy	24·63
North East Fife	23·21
Aberdeen	20·65
Banff and Buchan	22·17
Gordon	25·33
Kincardine and Deeside	21·84
Moray	22·86
Badenoch and Strathspey	22·31
Caithness	24·72
Inverness	27·37
Lochaber	26·14
Nairn	26·99
Ross and Cromarty	28·53
Skye and Lochalsh	28·92
Sutherland	27·42
East Lothian	22·35
Edinburgh	30·63
Midlothian	16·31
West Lothian	19·82
Argyll and Bute	26·45
Bearsden and Milngavie	27·58
Clydebank	26·77
Clydesdale	21·82
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	24·15
Cumnock and Doon Valley	22·61
Cunninghame	22·05
Dunbarton	27·94
East Kilbride	23·[illegible]
Eastwood	20·97
Glasgow	29·02
Hamilton	23·70
Inverclyde	24·25
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	19·38
Kyle and Carrick	20·46
Monklands	24·11
Motherwell	21·09
Renfrew	22·44
Strathkelvin	23·14
Angus	17·90
Dundee	30·43
Perth and Kinross	21·94
Orkney Islands	27·45
Shetland Islands	27·81
Western Isles	30·63
Scottish Homes	29·14

Scottish Council for Civil Liberties

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties; what matters he intends to discuss; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to meet representatives of the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties. If there are particular issues which the council wishes to raise with us, we shall ensure that any approach receives careful consideration.

Scottish Homes

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the name, *(b)* occupation and *(c)* honoraria, salary or allowance of each member of the board of Scottish Homes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table:

Scottish Homes Board Members

Name and Occupation	*Salary £ per annum*
Sir James Mellon KCMG (Chairman) Former Diplomat	33,970
John Richards CBE PPRIAS (Deputy Chairman) Architect with John Richards Associates	15,430
Norman Lessels CA Partner in Chiene and Tait, also non-executive Chairman of Standard Life Assurance Company	5,900
Mrs. Frances McCall MBE Chairperson of the Confederation of Scottish Housing Co-operatives	5,900
Professor Duncan MacLennan Director of the Centre for Housing Research at Glasgow University	5,900
Tom Begg JP BA OBE Lecturer in Economics at Queen Margaret College, Edinburgh	5,900
Mrs. Healther Sheerin Co-Director of family-owned retail carpet business	5,900
Mrs. Daphne Sleigh Freelance Market Researcher	5,900
Cameron Parker Non-executive Vice-Chairman of Lithngows Ltd.	5,900

All the appointments listed are held on a part-time basis and are on an estimated time commitment of half a day per week for members, one and a half days per week for the deputy chairman and three days per week for the chairman. In addition the chief executive, Peter McKinley, is an ex-officio member of the board. His salary is linked to civil service grade 2.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the *(a)* gross and *(b)* net capital allocation in outturn figures for Scottish Homes housing in each (i) district and (ii) area, expressed as a cost per dwelling unit; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the *(a)* gross and *(b)* net housing revenue allocation in outturn figures for Scottish Homes housing in each (i) district and (ii) area, expressed as a cost per dwelling unit; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information sought is not held by the Scottish Office Environment Department as allocations to Scottish Homes regions or districts are a matter for Scottish Homes itself.

History

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to promote the learning of local history in Scottish *(a)* primary, *(b)* secondary and *(c)* further education establishments; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The content and delivery of the curriculum in schools are primarily matters for the education authorities. Studies based on local history are common in the early stages and guidance on the five to 14 curriculum issued by the Scottish Office Education Department will take account of the place of local history in the development of wider historical understanding. Courses for standard grade and higher grade may draw on local history as appropriate to illustrate topics and themes. The modular national certificate, introduced under the Government's action plan facilitates the inclusion of local history in a large number of programmes run by further education centres. Further education centres also provide bases for groups with an interest in local history.

Lord Lieutenants

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* the names and *(b)* the occupations of each lord-lieutenant and deputy lord-lieutenant in Scotland; who is responsible for their nomination; what salary, honoraria, allowance or expenses each receives; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Lord lieutenants in Scotland are appointed by Her Majesty. Deputy lieutenants are appointed by the lord-lieutenant, once he has been informed by the Secretary of State that Her Majesty does not disapprove of the appointments which the lord-lieutenant proposes. No salary, honoraria or allowances are paid, but lord-lieutenants may claim reimbursement of expenses incurred as a result of their official duties. Current information about occupations is not held centrally. The names of lord-lieutenants and deputy lieutenants are as follows.

HER MAJESTY'S LORD-LIEUTENANTS IN SCOTLAND

Aberdeenshire
Captain Colin A. Farquharson

Angus
The Right Hon. The Earl of Airlie KT GCVO

Argylle and Bute
The Most Hon. The Marquess of Bute

Ayrshire and Arran
Major Richard Y. Henderson TD

Banffshire
James A. S. McPherson Esq. CBE

Berwickshire
Major General Sir John Swinton KCVO OBE

Caithness
The Right Hon. The Viscount Thurso

Clackmannan
The Right Hon. The Earl of Mar and Keillie

Dumfries
Captain Ronald C. Cunningham-Jardine

Dunbartonshire
Brigadier Donald D. G. Hardie TD

East Lothian
Sir Hew Fleetwood Hamilton-Dalrymple Bt KCVO

Fife
The Right Hon. The Earl of Elgin and Kincardine TD

Inverness
Lt. Cdr. Lachlan R. D. Mackintosh of Mackintosh OBE

Kincardineshire
The Right Hon. The Viscount of Arbuthnott CBE DSC FRSE

Lanarkshire
Hutchinson B. Sneddon Esq. CBE

Midlothian
Captain George W. Burnet LVO

Morayshire
Captain Sir Iain M. Tennant KT

Nairn
The Right Hon. The Earl of Leven and Melville

Orkney
Brigadier Malcolm G. Dennison

Perth and Kinross
Major Sir David H. Butter KCVO MC

Renfrewshire
Major J. David M. Crichton Maitland

Ross and Cromarty
Captain Roderick W. K. Stirling of Fairburn TD

Roxburgh, Ettrick and Lauderdale
His Grace The Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry KT VRD

Shetland
Magnus M. Shearer Esq.

Stewartry of Kirkcudbright
Sir Michael ARY Herries OBE MC

Stirling and Falkirk
Lt. Col. James Stirling of Garden CBE TD

Sutherland
Major General David Houston CBE

Tweeddale
Lt. Col. A. M. Sprot of Haystoun MC

Western Isles
The Right Hon. The Earl Granville MC

West Lothian
The Right Hon. The Earl of Morton

Wigtown
Major Edward S. Orr Ewing

The Lord Provosts of the four city districts—Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow—are lord-lieutenants of those districts ex officio.

HER MAJESTY'S DEPUTY LIEUTENANTS IN SCOTLAND

Aberdeenshire
Vice Lord-Lieutenant
Angus D. M. Farquharson Esq.

Deputy Lieutenants
The Lord Provost of Aberdeen
The Most Hon. The Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair CBE DStJ LLD FRCM FRSMAD FRSE
Marc Ellington of Towie Barclay
William J. Ferguson Esq.
The Right Hon. The Lord Forbes KBE
Major Laurence R. K. Fyffe MC
The Right Hon. The Lord Glenarthur
Mrs. Patricia M. Godsman
Major Francis C. Q. Irvine
Colonel John W. Nicol DSO
Captain Alexander A. A. A. D. M. Ramsay of Mar
James M. M. Humphrey Esq. OStJ
Colonel Rodney F. M. Windsor CBE

Angus
Vice Lord-Lieutenant
Lt. Col. Andrew B. Houston OBE MC

Deputy Lieutenants
The Lord Provost of Dundee
Colonel John G. Mathieson CBE TD ADC
John R. W. Stansfield Esq.
Miss Ruth Dundas
Robert S. S. Fothringham Esq.
Major General Roderick J. Ephraums CB OBE
The Right hon. The Baroness Carnegy of Lour
The Right Hon. The Lord Lyell
Brevet-Colonel David Carnegy-Arbuthnott of Balnamoon TD LLD
The Right Hon. Mary Countess of Strathmore and Kinghorne
Graham N. J. Smart Esq.
David L. Laird Esq.

Argyll and Bute
Vice Lord-Lieutenant
Colonel Archibald I. Fletcher OBE

Deputy Lieutenants
His Grace The Duke of Argyll
Colonel Tom B. M. Lamb OBE
Captain P. L. Mackie-Campbell
Captain Robert N. L. Malcolm of Poltalloch
Colonel Hector L. R. MacNeal OBE TD
Captain Sir Charles E. McGrigor Bt
Patrick L. M. Stewart Esq.
Lt. Col. R. M. T. Campbell-Preston OBE MC Td

Ayrshire and Arran
Vice Lord-Lieutenant
Sir Claud Hagart Alexander of Ballochmyle Bt

Deputy Lieutenants
Lt. Col. The Most Hon. The Marquess of Ailsa OBE
W. Aitken Esq. MBE
Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas H. E. Baird KCB
Sir William D. Coats Kt CStJ LLD
Captain R. W. F. Cuninghame
Captain N. E. F. Dalrymple-Hamilton CVO MBE DSC R
Lady Jean Fforde
Captain J. R. Findlay
John de C. E. Findlay Esq.
John A. H. Gow Esq.
J. H. Hodge Esq. BEM
James Hunter-Blair Esq.
Major P. N. B. Kennedy TD
Lt. Commander J. T. Lorimer DSO RNR
The Right Hon. The Lord Maclehose of Beoch KT GBE KCMG KCVO KStJ
James McCosh Esq.
Colonel W. W. McHarg Esq. OBE MC TD
Peter McK Robertson Esq. OBE
Major E. A. I. Young
Colonel John Henderson TD

Banffshire
Deputy Lieutenants
Captain Francis W. C. Hay OBE
Colonel G. B. Kynoch CBE TD
Dr. David F. Clark OBE
Mrs. Clare N. Russell

Berwickshire
Vice Lord-Lieutenant
Lt. Col. Simon J. Furness

Deputy Lieutenants
Kenneth H. Candlish Esq.
Hon. Lavinia Douglas-Home
Captain James Evans RD
Major John F. Mackinnon MC
Gilbert B. Millican Esq.
James Stobo Esq. OBE
David Thomson Esq.
Alexander R. Trotter Esq.
Douglas K. Tweedie Esq.

Caithness
Vice Lord-Lieutenant
Major Graham Dunnett TD

Deputy Lieutenants
Major Sir Ralph Anstruther Bt KCVO MC
Captain C. D. Farley-Sutton RN
Major A. G. Ferrier TD
Mrs. J. P. M. Grenfell
Major A. S. McKay
L. G. Rowe Esq.
Dr. K. M. Swanson PhD
J. G. Walford Esq. MBE
Sir David Black Bt

City of Aberdeen
Deputy Lieutenants
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Richard T. Ellis Esq. OBE MA LLB
Lt. Col. Charles J. H. Mann OBE OStJ TD
Captain Kenneth J. Peters CBE
Major David M. Proctor OBE
Frank Ramsay Esq.
Lt. Col. James Shankley TD
James F. Watt Esq.

City of Dundee
Deputy Lieutenants
James Cameron Esq.
Charles D. P. Farquhar Esq.
James P. Gowans Esq.
The Right Hon. The Lord Hughes PC CBE LLD
George W. Buckman Esq.
James F. Hoey Esq.

City of Edinburgh
Deputy Lieutenants
Lt. Col. Thomas D. S. Bell TD
Colonel Hugh Rose CBE DSO TD
Colonel William A. Dalziel TD CBE OStJ TD
Captain Kenneth Ryden MC
J. Gilmour Gray Esq.
Captain John Christie MC
W. D. H. Gregson Esq. CBE
Brigadier Francis H. Coutts CBE
Sir Peter Heatly CBE
Sir Donald McCallum CBE
Mrs. Nansi H. Mansbridge
Colonel Douglas N. Spratt CBE TD
William T. Stevenson Esq. CBE
Thomas Morgan Esq. CBE
Mrs. Helen M. Crummy MBE
James Hastie Esq.
Dr. Thomas L. Johnston FRSE
Dr. John McKay CBE

City of Glasgow
Vice Lord-Lieutenant
Mrs. Jean McFadden

Deputy Lieutenants
Sir Samuel C. Curran PhD DSc LLD FRS
Lt. Col. Leonard E. Dickson CBE MC TD
Ian J. A. Dyer Esq. MBE
The Right Hon. The Lord Galpern of Shettleston LLD FEIS
Peter M. Gemmill Esq.
Robert Gray Esq. CBE OStJ LLD
Sir William S. Gray LLD
Air Vice-Marshal AVR Johnstone CB DFC MBIM RAF (Ret'd)
Dr. Michael Kelly CBE OStJ PhD LLD
Patrick Lally Esq.
Bashir A. Maan Esq.
Captain John Mallard MBE VRD RNR
Peter T. McCann Esq. CBE OStJ JP
Gerald McGrath Esq.
James Mullen Esq.
Colonel A. Walker Naddell ERD KStJ
Philip O'Rouke Esq.
Miss A. M. Patrick
John K. Richmond Esq.
Colonel Lachlan Robertson OBE TD
Group Captain Marcus Robinson CB AFC AE
William L. Smith Esq. MC TD
Colonel A. T. Wilson VRD
Lord Wallace of Campsie KStJ
John H. Young Esq. OBE

Clackmannan
Deputy Lieutenants
Captain John Stephens
James E. M. Aitkinson Esq.
Lord Erskine
Alistair B. Cruickshanks Esq.

Dumfries
Vice Lord-Lieutenant
The Right Hon. The Earl of Annandale and Hartfell

Deputy Lieutenants
His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry KT VRD
Major Sir Rupert Buchanan-Jardine Bt. MC
The Earl of Dalkeith
Hon. Air Commodore Sir Hector Monro AE MP
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Housing Tenure

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the most up-to-date analysis of housing tenure type in *(a)* the Paisley, South parliamentary constituency, *(b)* Renfrew district, *(c)* Strathclyde and *(d)* Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on housing tenure type by parliamentary constituency is not collected centrally. The latest available information for Renfrew district, Strathclyde, and Scotland is set out in the table.

Domestic subjects on the valuation roll by tenure 31 March 1989

	Local authority		*SSHA*		*New town*		*Privately owned (incl. HA other than SSHA)*		*All domestic subjects*
Area	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*
Scotland	807,615	38·4	75,710	3·6	44,166	2·1	1,175,804	55·9	2,103,295
Strathclyde	426,002	45·5	43,579	4·7	27,451	2·9	438,234	46·9	935,266
Renfrew	35,120	43·2	6,351	7·8	—	—	39,878	49·0	81,349

Waste Disposal

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the disposal of industrial, commercial and domestic waste in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: Responsibility for regulating the disposal of industrial, commercial and domestic waste in Scotland rests with the district and islands councils. Around 93 per cent. of such wastes are landfilled with the

remainder being incinerated, recycled or transported to specialist facilities in England and Wales. The most recent report of the hazardous waste inspectorate, Scotland, a copy of which is lodged in the Library, describes waste disposal arrangements in Scotland in more detail.

Agricultural Colleges

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the development of the Scottish agricultural colleges.

Sir Hector Monro: The Scottish agricultural college was established on 1 April 1990 by bringing together into a single structure the North of Scotland college of agriculture, the East of Scotland college of agriculture and the West of Scotland college. This was in keeping with one of the principal recommendations of the Williams committee of inquiry which reported in September 1989. The college continues to operate from three centres of study at Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Auchincruive near Ayr. The college's administrative headquarters were recently transferred from Perth to Edinburgh. The college is a private company controlled by a board of directors. It is funded by the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department—AFD—to provide agricultural education and advisory services and to conduct agricultural research and development. The directors of the college have made significant progress towards developing the college as a body with a single corporate identity and in developing new services for the agricultural and [illegible] industries. In the financial year 1990-91, the last complete year for which published accounts are available, income was £33·3 million, of which £18·6 million was AFD grant.

Deprivation Relief

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to consider the implications of the 1991 census on the award of urban aid finance and other special initiatives to relieve deprivation; what criteria he intends to apply in deciding which communities should benefit from such finance in future; when he expects to announce his decisions; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Details should be available by the middle of 1993 of changes to the geographical targeting of the urban programme, following the results of the 1991 census. A final decision on the criteria by which individual areas will be assessed has yet to be taken.

Paisley College

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with representatives of Paisley college to discuss university status; when he next plans to meet representatives of Paisley college to discuss university status; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: On 23 October 1991 my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who was then Minister of State, met representatives of Paisley college of technology to discuss a number of issues, including university title. I have no plans at present to meet representatives of the college.

Foxbar River Women's Centre

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current position regarding urban aid assistance in relation to the Foxbar Rivers women's centre; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: Urban aid of £81,997 for construction costs, £20,361 for equipment and, for four years, £94,308 for running costs was approved in May 1991. In view of difficulties in finding a suitable site the date by which a start must be made has been put back until 30 September 1992.

Solvent Abuse

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his plans to discourage solvent abuse.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Solvent abuse is being tackled with particular emphasis on education and prevention and, where practicable, the restriction of sales of products containing volatile substances to young people. A £1·4 million GB-wide media campaign to inform parents was run during February this year. The impact of that campaign in Scotland is being evaluated. Schools will be encouraged to play their part. Re-Solv, the national charity, with Government support, recently launched a campaign to make retailers aware of the problem, the law and its requirements.

Aquatic Environment

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the responsibilities and duties of his Department and any agency which reports to his Department in relation to inshore waters, intertidal areas and maritime land; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: I refer the hon. Member to the Government's memorandum on this subject which was submitted to the Environment Committee of this House in the previous Session. It has now been published by HMSO as part of the Environment Committee's report on coastal zone protection and planning, volume II, minutes of evidence and appendices.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 12 June 1992

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Compensation Claims

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will outline the specific training undertaken by staff of his Department in relation to compensation claims; and what steps are taken to ensure the fair treatment of claimants.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Department issued guidance to its officials in 1990 on the principles to be taken into account when checking claims for compensation. Decisions are taken at a senior level, with legal advice being sought where appropriate.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what are his Department's criteria and guidelines in dealing with compensation claims.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Department is prepared to consider claims for compensation where loss is sustained through maladministration by court officials in matters for which the Lord Chancellor is responsible.

Staff dealing with the justification for and assessment of compensation claims are required to apply guidelines, the broad principles of which were reproduced in the *Law Society Gazette* in August 1990. Each claim is assessed on its individual merits.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether *(a)* the remuneration levels claimed and paid to solicitors and the Treasury Solicitor undertaking work for his Department in relation to compensation claims, *(b)* the work undertaken by claimants' solicitors to secure financial redress satisfactory to claimants and *(c)* delays between lodging and resolving claims reflect in compensation and costs paid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Claims for compensation are considered on the individual merits of the case. The Department will consider payment of a solicitor's reasonable costs in pursuing a claim but inevitably the process of assessing the validity of claims takes time, particularly where it involves communication with other offices within the Department or, on occasions, with the Treasury.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he expects to take decisions on the publication of guidelines as to the principles upon which his Department assesses ex gratia payments for compensation.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The broad principles upon which the Department assesses claims for ex gratia compensatory payments were outlined in an article in the *Law Society Gazette* in August 1990. Consideration is being given to further publication of these principles.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Maxwell Companies

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Attorney-General if the Serious Fraud Office will take steps to contact Dr. Werner Keicher of Vaduz with a view to obtaining his assistance in the investigations into the Maxwell group of companies.

The Attorney-General: It is the policy of the Serious Fraud Office not to divulge operational details relating to the proposed handling of its investigations. I am satisfied that all steps currently necessary properly to investigate the Maxwell group of companies are being taken.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Attorney-General if he will provide additional resources and instructions to the Serious Fraud Office in order that they can assist in the recovery of moneys belonging to the Maxwell pension funds.

The Attorney-General: The role of the Serious Fraud Office is to investigate and, where appropriate, prosecute alleged offences involving serious or complex fraud. Primary responsibility for the recovery of assets rests with the trustees of the Maxwell pension funds, the administrators and liquidators. The Serious Fraud Office assists those so engaged to the extent that it is lawfully able to do so and that such assistance does not detract from the discharge of its own duties.

I am satisfied that the SFO is properly resourced for the discharge of its duties.

TRANSPORT

Air Misses

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the aircraft near-miss involving a Caledonian Airways Tristar and a glider at a height of 2,500 feet at approximately 14.10 hours on 1 June eight miles south-west of Newcastle-upon-Tyne over Currock hill gliding site.

Mr. Norris: The responsibility for the safety regulation of United Kingdom civil aviation rests with the Civil Aviation Authority.

All air miss reports in United Kingdom airspace, involving civil or military aircraft, are investigated initially by the joint air miss section of the National Air Traffic Services, which is a joint CAA/Ministry of Defence organisation.

They are then examined by the joint air miss working group (JAWG), an independent committee drawn from a wide cross-section of responsible civil and aviation bodies. The JAWG investigation is not a disciplinary procedure; its purpose is to serve the interests of flight safety by establishing the cause of the air miss in order to try to devise ways of preventing a similar occurrence.

I have drawn the hon. Member's question to the attention of the Civil Aviation Authority and have asked it to write to him direct when the investigation into the air miss which is the subject of the question is complete.

Highway Code

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce his proposals for the revision of the highway code.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My right hon. Friend has laid before Parliament a document setting out his proposed alterations to the highway code. These take into account the many responses received to the Department's consultation document issued last October.

This has been the first major review of the highway code since 1978. The proposals contain forty two new rules and many other rules have been amended to reflect recent changes in the law and best road safety practice. We are taking the opportunity also to improve the format of the code in order to make it more attractive to the reader and so encourage further its regular use by all road users.

Hazardous Chemicals

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he intends to take to ensure that EC arrangements will not prevent the use of emergency action codes for the transportation and storage of hazardous chemicals.

Mr. Norris: My Department is working closely with the Home Office to promote the benefits of the emergency action codes in Europe with a view to incorporating them in the United Nations road transport agreement, "ADR", that is likely to form the basis of future commission proposals concerning the transport of dangerous goods. Commission officials have been involved in preliminary discussions.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

International Conventions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is currently granted by the Overseas Development Administration to help lower income signatory countries to implement action under *(a)* the Ramsar convention for the conservation of wetlands of international importance, *(b)* the convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage, *(c)* the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora and *(d)* the convention of the conservation of migratory species of wild animals.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The ODA funds a number of projects to support wildlife (biodiversity) and habitat conservation in developing countries which would assist them to implement action under the wildlife conventions mentioned. Since 1990 the ODA has committed over £20 million to such projects. Lists of projects are available in the Library of the House.

In addition, the Government:

(a) contributed about £34,000 in 1992 to the Ramsar Convention Trust Fund and gave a grant of £5,700 to support a Ramsar-related workshop for developing countries of south and west Asia;

(b) contributed about £90,000 in 1992 towards the World Heritage Fund;

(c) makes an annual contribution of about £85,000 to the CITES Trust Fund; has given an extra £40,000 to improve the international enforcement of CITES; makes an annual contribution of £10,000 to assist developing country delegates to attend CITES meetings, and has pledged £600,000 to support African elephant conservation projects, and

(d) contributed about £45,000 in 1992 to the Bonn Convention Trust Fund.

International Social Statistics

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to encourage the improvement in the coverage, reliability, breakdown of data by sex, income group and area, and availability of international social statistics.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It will continue to be our policy when considering the work programmes of those organisations of which we are members to encourage, as far as resources permit, improvements in the coverage, reliability, breakdown of data by sex, income group and area, and availability of international social statistics.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will indicate the total United Kingdom expenditure upon overseas aid in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available from *(a)* Government sources, *(b)* other public sector sources and *(c)* private and charitable sources; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* Gross public expenditure on overseas aid (£ million) in 1981 to 1990 was as follows:

	Total	*of which*	*CDC[1] project aid*
1981	1,184		68
1982	1,085		51
1983	1,174		56
1984	1,316		108
1985	1,324		79
1986	1,350		64
1987	1,295		63
1988	1,667		112
1989	1,793		151
1990	1,725		137

[1] Commonwealth Development Corporation resources include Government loans and income from investments in developing countries.

Grants by voluntary agencies (£ million) in 1981-1990 to developing countries, net of the grants given to these agencies by the Government, was as follows:

	£ million
1981	47
1982	58
1983	67
1984	105
1985	132
1986	119
1987	126
1988	132
1989	150
1990	184

Ngamiland

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much has been contributed by Her Majesty's Government to the construction of a buffalo fence in Ngamiland; and what estimate he has made of the damage it will cause to wildlife in the area.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* The British Government have made no contribution to the cost of this fence, nor have they been involved in any assessment of its likely impact.

United Nations Aid

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's policy on the European Community's timetable for meeting the United Nations aid target by the year 2000.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* The European Community has not set a timetable for reaching the United Nations aid target. The Government's aid programme has been increasing in real terms and is planned to continue to do so.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inheritance Tax

89. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many landowners have benefited in respect of inheritance tax in return for public access to their estates; and if he will list footpaths to which public access has resulted from conditional exemption.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 2 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *399*. Information about individual cases is covered by the normal rules of taxpayer confidentiality. However, heritage bodies are able to supply information about public access to heritage land including conditionally exempt land (although the land will not be identified as conditionally exempt). The main such bodies in England and Scotland are the Countryside Commission and the Countryside Commission for Scotland, and for land of scientific interest the respective Nature Conservancy Councils. In Wales and Northern Ireland the relevant bodies are the Countryside Council for Wales and the Environment Service of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to the Exchequer of inheritance tax benefit to landowners in return for public access to their estates.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 2 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *399*.

Environmental Costs

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to include environmental cost in measures used by his Department to measure economic performance.

Sir John Cope: Exploratory work on environmental accounts and indicators is under way at the Department of Environment and the Central Statistical Office. This work is still in its early stages.

Employee Share Ownership

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many employees have received shares under case law employee share ownership plans; and what is the current total value of shares in such schemes.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that the information is not available centrally.

Lodgers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he hopes to bring in legislation under which home owners will be able to let rooms to lodgers without liability to tax on the rent that they receive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Members for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) and for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) on 2 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *366*.

VAT Harmonisation

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the outcome of the meeting of the Council of Finance Ministers on 9 June; and if consideration was given to the harmonisation of value added tax levels.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 June 1992]:* The Economic and Finance Council of the European Community met in Luxembourg on 9 June and I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council discussed the Spanish programme for economic convergence as part of its regular multilateral surveillance exercises. We welcomed the programme's objective of non-inflationary growth via macroeconomic stabilisation, including a tightened fiscal stance, and the undertaking of significant structural reforms. Particular attention was drawn to the importance of the Spanish regional governments in achieving fiscal consolidation.

The removal of rigidities, particularly in the markets for labour and services, combined with a stable nominal exchange rate were welcomed as policies to reduce inflation and encourage wage moderation. The scale of Spanish proposals to improve the functioning of their labour market and to deregulate services was acknowledged. The Council urged the rapid introduction of these measures while stressing their importance to achieving sustainable non-inflationary growth. It was also agreed that the Council's multilateral surveillance exercises should be strengthened by paying more attention to structural measures in promoting economic convergence.

Over lunch there was a brief discussion of Commission proposals for further loans to Bulgaria and Romania but no decisions were reached.

The Council also discussed the Commission's future financing proposals. I argued that the Commission's proposals to increase Community spending in real terms between 1992 and 1997 by about 21 billion ecu (£14½ billion)—an increase of over 30 per cent.—were unacceptable and I was strongly supported by a majority of other member states. I pointed to the findings of the European Court of Auditors, demonstrating the poor value for money from Community spending. I argued against any increase in the own resources ceiling, stressing

that the Community had to live within its means and that taxpayers should not be asked to accept substantial increases in Community spending at a time when there was a need for national budgetary restraint.

On indirect taxes, the presidency tabled a global compromise covering the eight draft directives on excise duty rates and structures for tobacco products, mineral oils and alcoholic beverages and VAT.

There was little substantive discussion on these issues. I recorded the various problems the current text posed. On the minimum rate for spirits, although the proposed figure of 600 ecu per hectolitre of pure alcohol was an improvement on its predecessor (1,000 ecu), it would still require at least one member state to increase its duty rate. I could see no case in logic for the minimum rate for wine to be set at zero, but for a high positive rate for spirits. I said that there would also need to be a commitment to review the rates in the light of a proper study on competition in the alcoholic drinks market.

On alcohol structures, I argued that the revised text for intermediate products was still unacceptable since it would require products of 10 per cent. alcohol by volume to be taxed at a higher rate than a wine of 17 per cent. alcohol by volume. I noted that there were also a number of important technical points to be resolved including the treatment of strong wines, denatured alcohol and alcohol in foodstuffs.

On tobacco rates, I stressed the importance the United Kingdom attaches to an underpinning cash minimum for cigarettes and other tobacco products.

On VAT issues, I stated that the United Kingdom view had not changed, particularly on the minimum standard rate of VAT, our concerns with the proposed treatment of works of art and the need to safeguard our present exemption at import; and to ensure protection for donated goods sold in charity shops. I expect ECOFIN to return to this dossier on 29 June.

A satisfactory political agreement was reached on a Presidency package consisting of the most contentious points in the draft Capital Adequacy Directive (which will provide a harmonized framework of capital requirements on banks' and securities firms' trading portfolios in support of the Second Banking Coordination Directive and the draft Investment Services Directive). This opens the way to further technical work on the rest of the Directive. An array of important points remain to be addressed before further discussion at ECOFIN on 29 June.

I ensured that the draft directive would allow securities firms to continue to take on large tradeable positions ("large exposures"), that it should provide an appropriate treatment of reverse repurchase agreements, stock borrowing and similar arrangments, and that it should have a mechanism for convergence with wider international standards currently under development. I successfully secured all these objectives, which I made clear were vital to the international competitiveness of the United Kingdom financial services sector.

EDUCATION

Mature Students

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has of the number of mature students who have paid national insurance contributions and who are not entitled to claim social security benefits.

Mr. Forman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 9 June 1992, *Official Report*, columns *88-89*.

Student-Staff Ratios

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what change has taken place in the average student-staff ratio in universities in the United Kingdom between 1979-80 and 1992-93.

Mr. Forman: Data for student-staff ratios in universities in Great Britain are shown below for 1979-80 to 1990-91:

	Universities
1979-80	9·3
1984-85	10·3
1989-90	11·8
1990-91[1]	12·3

[1] Provisional.
Source: Universities' Statistical Record.

Adult Students, Islington

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how he envisages provision being made within the London borough of Islington after 1 April 1993, for adult students with learning difficulties, for basic literacy and English, and for basic mathematics.

Mr. Forman: Under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, the duty to secure provision of all kinds of further education for adults, including those with learning difficulties, will from 1 April 1993 be divided between the new further education funding councils and local education authorities. Responsibility for securing adequate provision of literacy and numeracy teaching for adults will pass to the further education funding councils. Both the councils and local education authorities will have a duty to have regard to the requirements of adults with learning difficulties in respect of the types of education for which they will be responsible.

Section 6(5) of the Act provides that colleges and centres which do not transfer to the new further education sector should be able to apply through FE colleges within the new sector for funds to support that part of their work which falls within the funding councils' remit. The FE college will forward the application to the funding council if facilities for the kind of courses in question are not adequate in the locality. If the FE college does not forward the application, its decision will be subject to review by the Secretary of State.

My right hon. Friend will be making clear in guidance to the councils that he does not expect to see precipitate changes in the pattern of educational provision for adults. Such provision should make the best use of whatever facilities and expertise are available and should be readily accessible to local communities.

Teacher Training

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what provision will be made in the Liverpool area for teacher training; what schools will be used as training bases; what assessment he is making of the existing private studies in Liverpool developing between the Liverpool institute of higher education, Liverpool university and local comprehensive schools; if it is his intention to maintain those arrangements; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether new teacher training arrangements will be based entirely on opted-out schools.

Mr. Forth: Courses of initial teacher training are approved by my right hon. Friend against criteria laid down by him. The Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE) advises him on whether courses meet these criteria.

Following consultation earlier this year my right hon. Friend announced that changes would be made in the criteria and procedures for the accreditation of training for secondary school teachers. Details of the new criteria and procedures will be issued shortly.

Under the new procedures it will be a matter for individual schools and higher education institutions in Liverpool, as elsewhere, to work together. Participating schools will be expected to meet explicit criteria, including performance indicators. All maintained and independent secondary schools will be eligible to be considered for selection as partner schools and it will be for the higher education institutions to justify their selection of schools, in the first instance to CATE.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's arrangements for consulting the Data Protection Registrar during the planning stage of any initiative involving the collection, use or disclosure of personal data; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: The Department has in the past consulted the Data Protection Registrar on guidelines for the holding of personal data on computer systems in educational establishments and agencies, about the student loans scheme, and in relation to the Department's internal systems.

The Department's procedures are reviewed annually and I am satisfied that they are effective in safeguarding personal data and in ensuring subject access.

Officials will continue to consult the Registrar where appropriate.

Engineering Graduates

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he received a copy of the Engineering Council's recent report on international comparisons of engineering graduate manpower output; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: Engineering has a vital part to play in our economy. Higher education institutions are important providers of qualified manpower, and our policies are aimed at increasing their ability to respond to the needs of industry and students. Those needs are usefully informed by a knowledge of the position in competitor countries. I welcome the Engineering Council's report, which I received on 4 June, as a contribution to such knowledge.

Budget

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will set out the proportion of the education budget retained centrally by each local education authority.

Mr. Forth: Information is not available in the form requested. The proportion of each LEA's potential schools budget (PSB) delegated to schools in 1990-91 and 1991-92 is contained in the table below, together with each LEA's central administration costs as a proportion of its PSB. Figures for 1992-93 are not yet available, but I will write to my hon. Friend when they are.

The extent of LEAs' delegation to schools (1991-92)

(1)	(2)		(3)	
Local education authority	*PSB delegated to schools*		*Central administration as proportion of PSB*	
	1991-92 (per cent.)	*(1990-91) (per cent.)*	*1991-92 (per cent.)*	*(1990-91) (per cent.)*
1. Stockport	88·69	(—)	3·15	(—)
2. Rochdale	88·46	(85·74)	2·37	(2·55)
3. Sunderland	88·40	(86·86)	2·15	(3·10)
4. Bolton	88·31	(89·10)	2·06	(2·02)
5. Northumberland	88·16	(86·54)	2·37	(3·10)
6. Manchester	88·03	(—)	3·54	(—)
7. Sefton	87·86	(87·44)	2·71	(4·45)
8. Berkshire	87·68	(87·68)	2·78	(2·71)
9. West Sussex	87·67	(87·49)	2·09	(1·95)
10. Suffolk	87·56	(85·66)	·78	(2·75)
11. Cambridgeshire	87·45	(80·75)	2·03	(4·82)
12. Cheshire	87·35	(84·31)	1·71	(5·15)
13. Devon	87·14	(83·11)	2·53	(3·06)
14. Warwickshire	86·72	(85·24)	3·19	(3·90)
15. Bradford	86·68	(86·04)	3·55	(3·87)
16. Buckinghamshire	86·58	(84·88)	3·55	(4·58)
17. Leeds	86·26	(86·12)	4·22	(3·87)
18. Hertfordshire	86·19	(—)	3·81	(—)
19. Hampshire	86·11	(85·78)	3·16	(3·34)
20. Shropshire	86·09	(84·60)	2·00	(2·48)

(1) Local education authority	(2) PSB delegated to schools		(3) Central administration as proportion of PSB	
	1991-92 (per cent.)	(1990-91) (per cent.)	1991-92 (per cent.)	(1990-91) (per cent.)
21. Salford	86·03	(84·37)	2·64	(3·19)
22. Northamptonshire	86·01	(84·74)	2·23	(3·69)
23. South Tyneside	85·94	(83·76)	2·06	(4·20)
24. Sheffield	85·92	(82·61	3·26	(3·49)
25. Barnsley	85·91	(83·38)	2·88	(2·86)
26. Kent	85·84	(84·87)	4·61	(3·79)
27. Wirral	85·73	(—)	2·59	(—)
28. Solihull	85·59	(85·31)	1·93	(2·49)
29. Walsall	85·50	(85·72)	3·40	(3·37)
30. Somerset	85·48	(82·91)	2·69	(3·58)
31. Calderdale	85·46	(81·86)	2·39	(4·84)
32. Lincolnshire	85·46	(85·13)	2·21	(2·68)
33. Rotherham	85·43	(86·13)	3·76	(3·74)
34. Cumbria	85·41	(82·53)	3·02	(4·04)
35. East Sussex	85·37	(84·09)	2·20	(2·42)
36. Bury	85·31	(81·92)	2·00	(4·70)
37. Barking	85·20	(87·01)	3·27	(3·34)
38. Dorset	85·16	(81·85)	3·72	(4·71)
39. Sutton	85·15	(83·44)	3·84	(4·05)
40. Havering	85·09	(83·87)	1·93	(2·28)
41. Essex	85·08	(84·03)	3·52	(4·11)
	see Footnote 2			
42. Kirklees	84·96	(83·38)	3·65	(3·98)
43. Bromley	84·88	(80·70)	5·70	(4·49)
44. Westminster	84·88	(77·96)	5·59	(8·20)
45. Merton	84·86	(79·79)	3·33	(7·86)
46. Staffordshire	84·84	(84·61)	4·10	(4·51)
47. Enfield	84·68	(81·50)	3·69	(5·56)
48. Oxfordshire	84·68	(81·37)	2·85	(5·46)
49. Surrey	84·61	(85·57)	4·85	(6·17)
50. Humberside	84·60	(81·71)	3·01	(3·57)
51. North Tyneside	84·55	(82·30)	3·99	(5·03)
52. St. Helens	84·53	(83·27)	3·65	(3·69)
53. Gloucestershire	84·47	(86·78)	3·37	(3·65)
54. Dudley	84·47	(83·98)	3·64	(3·62)
55. Norfolk	84·37	(83·62)	3·35	(4·05)
56. Kingston	84·35	(78·46)	4·11	(7·09)
57. Wakefield	84·28	(82·87)	1·49	(2·98)
58. Leicestershire	84·28	(—)	2·89	(—)
59. North Yorkshire	84·16	(82·62)	2·37	(4·15)
60. Doncaster	84·00	(85·45)	2·29	(2·29)
61. Hereford and Worcester	83·99	(—)	3·18	(—)
62. Derbyshire	83·97	(83·37)	3·04	(2·96)
63. Nottinghamshire	82·96	(82·72)	3·41	(5·24)
64. Cornwall	83·95	(83·57)	3·52	(3·72)
65. Trafford	83·94	(84·38)	3·68	(3·49)
66. Gateshead	83·92	(83·29)	2·99	(3·01)
67. Hillingdon	83·91	(—)	6·17	(—)
68. Tameside	83·80	(84·40)	2·16	(2·47)
69. Haringey	83·77	(79·36)	4·78	(6·04)
70. Isle of Wight	83·75	(82·48)	1·92	(4·68)
71. Barnet	83·68	(84·36)	4·96	(5·07)
72. Brent	83·51	(83·63)	4·26	(4·82)
73. Birmingham	83·41	(83·04)	3·85	(4·36)
74. Cleveland	83·37	(83·63)	4·64	(5·56)
75. Bedfordshire	83·29	(84·02)	3·66	(3·91)
76. Wiltshire	83·26	(82·35)	3·18	(3·92)
77. Hounslow	83·26	(81·59)	4·46	(5·19)
78. Knowlsey	83·24	(81·91)	4·99	(5·07)
79. Isles of Scilly	83·17	(—)	6·41	(—)
80. Oldham	83·14	(81·64)	4·53	(4·98)
81. Redbridge	83·13	(82·71)	5·10	(4·91)
82. Wigan	83·03	(83·28)	4·18	(3·70)
83. Ealing	82·92	(81·66)	5·86	(6·33)
84. Liverpool	82·92	(84·91)	4·65	(4·07)
85. Avon	82·78	(82·30)	3·87	(3·40)
86. Coventry	82·76	(80·93)	4·37	(6·00)
87. Sandwell	82·74	(83·24)	4·51	(3·75)
88. Lancashire	82·74	(82·66)	3·46	(3·65)
89. Richmond	82·58	(79·98)	4·82	(6·91)
90. Harrow	82·45	(81·52)	5·05	(5·76)
91. Newcastle	82·38	(79·76)	5·09	(6·12)

(1) Local education authority	(2) PSB delegated to schools		(3) Central administration as proportion of PSB	
	1991-92 (per cent.)	(1990-91) (per cent.)	1991-92 (per cent.)	(1990-91) (per cent.)
92. Durham	82·16	(83·13)	4·79	(4·35)
93. Wolverhampton	81·55	(81·77)	5·33	(5·26)
94. Bexley	81·32	(81·33)	5·06	(4·61)
95. Croydon	81·00	(—)	4·15	(—)
96. Waltham Forest	80·22	(79·65)	6·60	(7·02)
97. Newham	79·46	(—)	5·94	(—)
National Averages	84·89	(83·76)	3·44	(4·06)

Footnotes to table showing the extent of delegation

1. Ninety seven local education authorities (LEAs) had LMS schemes in operation in 1991-92, and were required to publish budget statements under section 42 of the Education Reform Act. The LEAs are ranked according to the percentage of funds delegated to schools, with those delegating more at the top of the ranking order. Schemes for the 12 inner London LEAs other than Westminster did not come into operation until 1 April 1992.
2. The *potential schools budget* (PSB) consists of the major part of the general schools budget (GSB) – ie the GSB less expenditure on certain excepted items: capital expenditure; expenditure supported by central government grants; and expenditure on school meals, home to school transport and transitional exceptions (eg grounds maintenance). The amount which the schools themselves decide how to spend, as a proportion of the PSB, is a percentage used as an indicator of the extent to which LEAs have delegated resources to their schools. A new requirement from 1993 (1995 for inner London authorities) is that this percentage should be a minimum of 85 per cent. The percentage for the previous year 1990-91 is given in brackets. Where a figure is not given in brackets the LMS scheme was not in operation during that year.
3. Expenditure on central administration – one of the discretionary exceptions included in the PSB – expressed as a percentage of the PSB. The previous yearŒs percentage is given in brackets.

NB The percentages stated may differ from the percentages calculated by individual LEAs because of the effects of rounding.

School Places

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what powers an education authority has to prevent the governing body of a school increasing the number of places at that school above the standard number set by the education authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Under the Education Reform Act 1988, schools now have to plan to admit to at least a number which reflects the capacity of the school—the standard number. Where the LEA controls admissions, a school governing body may propose that the admissions limit be raised beyond the standard number. If the proposal is rejected by the LEA, the governing body may apply to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for an increase in the school's standard number.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, column *446*, if he will make a statement on the reasons for his Department's spending on advertising and promotion being expected to fall between 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Forman: Expenditure in 1991-92 includes spending on the teacher recruitment campaign and the parents charter. The reduction in 1992-93 is because there will not be a teacher recruitment campaign this year and there are no plans at present further to publicise the parents charter.

EMPLOYMENT

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many partnerships have been established between the training and enterprise councils and the careers services.

Mr. McLoughlin: Pump priming funding has been made available enabling the establishment in 1992-93 of 56 careers service partnerships between training and enterprise councils and local education authorities.

Health and Safety Inspectors

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many health and safety inspectors were employed in the northern region in each year since 1987.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) field inspectors are based in a network of area offices, with the exception of mines inspectors who are organised by districts. The available information for the 1 April each year is given in the following tables:

Inspectors based in the Health and Safety Executive's north east area office

Year	Number
1987	35
1988	28·5
1989	28·5
1990	34·5
1991	38
1992	37·5

Notes:

1. Figures include factory and agricultural inspectors for all years.
2. 1990, 1991 and 1992 figures include field-based quarries inspectors who transferred to the factory and agricultural division in October 1989.
3. 1991 and 1992 figures include field-based railway inspectors following the transfer of the railway inspectorate from the Department of Transport in December 1990.

Inspectors based at Health and Safety Executive's mines district offices

District	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Scottish and North Eastern	7 6	10	10	2	2	2

Notes:

1. Pre 1990 figures are for mines and quarries inspectors. Figures for 1990, 1991 and 1992 are for mines inspectors only, following the transfer of the quarries inspectorate to the factory and agricultural division in October 1989.
2. The table shows that the Scottish and North Eastern district offices amalgamated in 1988. District boundaries were also changed.
3. The figure given for 1992 are for mines inspectors based at the Health and Safety Executive's north east area office.

Electrical Equipment Certification Service

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans her Department has for the future status and role of the electrical equipment certification service with the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are at present no plans to change the existing role and status of the electrical equipment certification service. However, the Health and Safety Executive recently commissioned consultants to review the role and status of the service. The executive is currently consulting staff and other interested parties before considering whether to make any recommendation to the Health and Safety Commission and Ministers, in the light of the conclusions of the consultants, concerning the service's future role and status.

WALES

Local Government

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the statutory responsibilities currently placed on local authorities in Wales *(a)* at district council level and *(b)* at county council level;

(2) if he will list the non-statutory and permissive powers available to local authorities in Wales *(a)* at district council level and *(b)* at county council level.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Pembrey Country Park

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial assistance his Department or the Welsh Development Agency have provided to Llanelli borough council for the purpose of transforming the land of the former Royal Ordnance factory, Pembrey, Llanelli, into the Pembrey country park.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department made no direct contribution; but the Welsh Development Agency provided some £750,000 to Llanelli borough council under the derelict land programme for the reclamation of the former Royal Ordnance factory site at Pembrey.

Cancer

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the average cancer mortality rates in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information given in the following table relates to death rates per million population from malignant cancer (ICD140-208):

Cancer Death Rate per Million Population[1]

Year	Males	Females	Persons
1981	2,850·5	2,401·8	2,619·5
1982	2,882·8	2,459·2	2,664·4
1983	2,978·3	2,495·0	2,729·2
1984	3,066·9	2,588·9	2,820·6
1985	3,094·0	2,706·8	2,894·6
1986	3,170·0	2,609·0	2,881·3
1987	3,147·9	2,684·4	2,909·5
1988	3,189·4	2,810·5	2,994·4
1989	3,197·0	2,769·0	2,976·6
1990	3,199·5	2,673·8	2,928·7

[1] Death rates unadjusted for changes in the age-sex structure of the population.

Dredging

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy for the material dredged from south Wales ports and their fairways to be used in place of the sand and gravel dredged off the south Wales coast for use in the building industry, instead of being dumped at sea.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The majority of material dredged from harbours and ports is not suitable for use in the building industry and it would not, therefore be appropriate for Government policy to require it to be used in place of sand and gravel dredged off the coast.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy for the material dredged from south Wales's ports and fairways to be used for combating coastal erosion on certain beaches and mudflats.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, issues licences under the Food and Environment Act 1985 for the disposal of dredged material at sea around the Welsh and English coastlines. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given today by my right hon. Friend, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. For my part, I am encouraging bodies with coastal defence responsibilities to liaise with port authorities to see whether acceptable arrangements can be made to use such dredged material for combating coastal erosion.

Water Rates

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing average water rates in Wales in each year since 1979 in cash and constant prices.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The most comprehensive information on water prices historically, including those in Wales, is contained in the Water Services Association's publication, "Water Facts", copies of which are available for inspection in the Library of the House.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications have been submitted by health service units in Wales to become NHS trusts in April 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To date, formal applications have been received from 13 health service units seeking NHS trust status in 1993. In addition, a proposal to establish the South and East Wales Ambulance NHS Trust will be made formally within the next few days.

Details on the applications, together with the date of commencement of three months public consultation are for each health authority:

12 June 1992
CLWYD
Acute Unit North (Ysbyty Glan Clwyd)
Acute Unit South (Wrexham Maelor hospital, Wrexham)
Community and mental health unit

GWENT
South Gwent acute unit (Royal Gwent hospital, Newport)

WEST GLAMORGAN
West unit (Singleton hospital, Swansea)

19 June 1992
EAST DYFED
Carmarthen/Dinefwr health unit
(West Wales general hospital, Carmarthen)
Ceredigion health unit
(Bronglais hospital, Aberystwyth)
Llanelli/Dinefwr health unit
(Prince Philip hospital, Llanelli)

MID GLAMORGAN
Ogwr health unit
(Princess of Wales hospital, Bridgend)

WEST GLAMORGAN
East Unit (Neath and Port Talbot hospitals)

26 June 1992
SOUTH GLAMORGAN
Llandough health unit (Llandough hospital)

POWYS
Powys health unit

GWENT
Community and mental health unit
Gwent, Powys and South Glamorgan ambulance services

No views have been reached on any of the applications. The purpose of the consultative exercise is to provide the fullest opportunity for local people and community interests, including staff at the hospitals and services concerned, to put forward their views on the specific proposals contained in the applications. Copies of the applications will be placed in the Library of the House in accordance with the consultative timetable.

I expect decisions on the application to be announced in the autumn. The outcome will reflect the representations received, taken alongside the individual merits of the applications themselves. Ministers are already on record with their commitment that no application will be approved unless they are personally convinced of the benefits to patients which will be derived from NHS trust status. This remains the position.

SCOTLAND

Saw-billed Ducks

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what licences to control the numbers of saw-billed ducks have been issued in Scotland this year; and for what reasons.

Sir Hector Monro: Thirty four licences have been issued this year for the purpose of preventing serious damage to fisheries.

PRIME MINISTER

Ministerial Advisers

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 8 June, *Official Report*, column *10*, to which Minister each adviser is attached.

The Prime Minister: The information is as follows:

Name	*Minister(s) served*
K. Adams	Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
E. Bickham	Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
T. Burke	Secretary of State for the Environment
J. Caine	Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
D. W. D. Cameron	Financial Secretary
Dr. E. Cottrell	Secretary of State for Employment
Sir P. Cradock	Prime Minister
M. Fraser	Minister of State for Overseas Development
Sir C. Foster	Secretary of State for Transport
C. M. Grantham	Secretary of State for Education
J. Gray	Jointly to the Ministers for Local Government and Inner Cities; Environment and Countryside; and Housing and Planning
D. Green	Prime Minister
Ms. S. Hole	Chief Whip
Mrs. S. Hogg	Prime Minister
C. Hopson	Secretary of State for National Heritage
A. Kemp	President of the Board of Trade
Mrs. T. Keswick	Home Secretary
Mrs. E. Laing	Secretary of State for Transport
G. Mackay	Secretary of State for Scotland
R. Marsh	Secretary of State for Health
J. Mayhew	Secretary of State for Social Security
M. McManus	Secretary of State for Wales
P. J. E. Miller	Secretary of State for Defence
D. Poole	Prime Minister
Mrs. K. Ramsey	Prime Minister
Dr. W. Robinson	Chancellor of the Exchequer
P. Rock	Secretary of State for the Environment
A. Rosling	Prime Minister
D. Ruffley	Jointly to the three Ministers of State and the Under Secretary of State in the Home Office
I. Stewart	Lord President
Lady Strathnaver	President of the Board of Trade
N. True	Prime Minister
I. R. Wilton	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
A. Young	Secretary of State for Scotland

Notes:
Mr. J. Bercow was included in error in the answer for 8 June. He has not been appointed as a special adviser in this Parliament.
Mr. Gray has since been appointed as a special adviser.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for disability living allowance have been made by people covered by the Seaham and Peterlee DSS offices; how many have been *(a)* allowed and *(b)* disallowed; and how many are yet to be determined.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Tax

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the cost to public funds of merging the social security and tax systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: There are many different options for merging the social security and tax systems; for example through a basic income guarantee, tax/credits and negative income tax schemes.

We have made no assessment of the cost of detailed options, but it is clear that such schemes could be very expensive. For example, a basic income guarantee around the level of retirement pension, could easily cost in the region of £200 billion per annum and yet still be unlikely to eliminate all need for income-related benefits.

Occupational Pension Funds

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what requirement there is on occupational pension funds to include pensioners of such funds on the board of trustees; and in what proportion.

Miss Widdecombe: There is no requirement in trust law that occupational pension schemes include pensioners on the board of trustees. The trust deed or scheme rules lays down who is eligible to be a trustee. The Occupational Pension Board considered the inclusion of pensioners in their 1989 report, "Protecting Pensions". They concluded that although this would be desirable, the statutory requirement of a pensioner from a scheme would not provide the most simple or effective means of ensuring that the interests of pensioners are considered.

The committee to review pension law, announced on 8 June, includes in its terms of reference the consideration of the role of trustees and will be taking into account the rights and interests of pensioners, as well as scheme members and employers.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the latest information available on the number of people in occupational pension schemes whose pensions are threatened because the assets of these schemes are not able to meet the pension payments and future commitments; how many schemes are involved; and what examination has been made of how far problems have arisen because of ineffective management, improper management or some other reason.

Miss Widdecombe: There are more than 17 million current members and pensioners of occupational pension schemes. We are satisfied that the vast majority of pensioners belong to schemes which are properly and securely operated. We are currently in close touch with the trustees of Maxwell pension schemes. At present, 240 Maxwell pensioners have not received payments for May and June, and a further 4,000 may face a reduction in their pensions in July. As part of an investigation of Maxwell companies, the Serious Fraud Office is looking into the reasons for the shortfall in their pension funds. However, it is too early to say exactly what happened.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of attendance allowance there are from the Seaham and Peterlee offices at the present time and for the years since 1988-89.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that information is not held about the number of such recipients for the years since 1988-89. Information about the number of current recipients is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Pensioners

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners are receiving the state pension from the Seaham and Peterlee offices at the present time and in the years from 1988-89.

Miss Widdecombe: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Community Care

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what account will be taken of the incidence of rural areas in transfer of DSS funds to local authorities under community care proposals;

(2) what account will be taken of levels of poverty in transfer of DSS funds to local authorities under community care proposals;

(3) what account will be taken of the proportionately larger long-term hospital population in Scotland in transfer of DSS funds to local authorities under the Government's community care proposals;

(4) whether, under the Government's community care proposals, the transfer of DSS funds to English, Welsh and Scottish local authorities will be arranged under the Barnett formula.

Mr. Burt: The funds which are to be transferred to the Department of Health for distribution to local authorities for community care purposes are those which the Department would otherwise have expended from April 1993 on the higher levels of social security entitlement for people newly entering residential care and nursing homes.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when higher education students were entitled to receive housing benefit; and what was the maximum weekly rent for 37 weeks within one year, that a student receiving full grant and claiming the full student loan but with no additional income needed to pay before starting to receive housing benefit.

Mr. Burt: Before 1 September 1990 housing benefit was available on a limited basis to full-time higher education students provided they did not pay rent to their educational establishment. Full-time students have not generally been entitled to claim housing benefit since that date, although partners of students and students in vulnerable groups have retained eligibility.

A student under age 25 in receipt of the standard maintenance grant and able to claim benefit in April 1990, may have received some help through housing benefits in respect of rent above a level of around £28·30 a week in London, and £17·80 a week outside London. Student loans were not available before 1 September 1990.

Students (Income)

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the difference in guaranteed income per week between *(a)* non-final year student, under the age of 25 years receiving full grant and claiming full student loan but with no additional income and *(b)* a similarly aged unemployed person claiming income support and housing benefit and paying an annual rent of £1,480; and what would be the difference in the case of a person aged 25 years.

Mr. Burt: It is not possible to make the comparisons requested. The level of income support and housing benefit payable to a person satisfying the qualifying conditions for receipt of these benefits will vary according to the circumstances of the case.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Weapons (Transport)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make public the conclusions of the recent review of nuclear weapon safety carried out by his Department's scientists, with particular reference to accidents involving nuclear weapons road convoys;

(2) if he will publish the conclusions of the review carried out by his Department's scientists into the safety of nuclear warheads in the wake of the US Drell report.

Mr. Aitken: Yes, a statement of the review's conclusions will be made public at the appropriate time.

Weapon Sales

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the items of information that are intended to be included in the United Kingdom's contribution to the United Nations register of weapons sales; and if he will make a statement describing public access to the register.

Mr. Aitken: The United Nations register of conventional arms transfers requires all participant states to record their imports and exports each year of tanks, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, armoured combat vehicles, large calibre artillery, missiles and missile systems. The register came into effect in January 1992. The United Nations has not yet decided how the register will be published but a copy of the British contribution will be placed in the Library of the House in the early part of next year.

RAF Aircraft

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by aircraft type, the number of aircraft in the Royal Air Force that are currently surplus to requirements and their value.

Mr. Aitken: The following aircraft have been declared to the Ministry of Defence disposal sales organisation as being surplus to RAF requirements, and are currently awaiting disposal.

Fixed-wing aircraft	*Number*
Andover C1	1
Buccaneer S2B	4
Buccaneer S2A	2
Canberra TT18	1
Canberra B2	1
Gnat T1	1
Jet Provost T Mk 3A	3
Jet Provost T3	2
Jet Provost T4	6
Jet Provost T Mk 5A	11
Jaguar GR1	4
Jaguar T2	1
Lightning F3	1
Meteor NF(T)14	2
Meteor T7	1
Meteor F8	1
Phantom FGR2	10
Sea Harrier FRS1	1
Vampire T11	1
Venture Glider	3
Helicopters	
Lynx WG13	1
Scout AH1	1
Wasp HAS1	1

The condition of the aircraft varies from scrap hulks to complete aircraft.

Sales of surplus equipment are conducted on a competitive basis to maximise receipts. Information concerning prices achieved or anticipated is commercially confidential and cannot be released.

Exercise Allegiance Exchange

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by *(a)* aircraft type and *(b)* participating country, the number of estimated hours of low flying that will take place during the NATO exercise Allegiance Exchange.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The aircraft type, participating country and hours flown at low level during the NATO exercise Allegiance Exchange/Ardent Ground, which ended on 6 June 1992, were as follows:

Aircraft type	*Country*	*Number of hours flown at low level*
A-10	USA	22
Alpha-Jet	Germany	72
F 16	Belgium	28
F 16	Netherlands	26
G 91	Italy	76
Jaguar	United Kingdom	16
Tornado F3	United Kingdom	15

Model Tanks (Theft)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement in respect of the theft of two model Army tanks from a training area at Llanbister, near Llandrindod Wells, Powys; and what was their total value.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During the period 11 to 22 May 1992, 88 inflatable tanks were deployed in mid-Wales to add realism to exercises involving units of the Royal Air Force, the United States Air Force and the Royal Netherlands Air Force. Of these three were not recovered from locations at Tregaron, Llanidloes and Crossgates, and are presumed to have been stolen. Local civil police are investigating. The total replacement value of the three items is £26,682.

Drugs Theft

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how potentially fatal drugs used to combat the effects of chemical and biological weapons, stolen from the home of an airman at Carterton near RAF Brize Norton, came to be on the airman's property.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The stolen items were issued to all personnel who went to the Gulf during the Gulf conflict and were retained by the individual concerned as a training aid in support of his normal duties as an instructor.

Low Flying

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the military jet aircraft that overflew the village of Clayton, South Yorkshire at approximately 15.15 hours on 26 May at below permitted height.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have no reason to believe any aircraft were flying below the permitted height of 1,000 ft at the time but if the hon. Member would care to write to my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence with further details he will consider them.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's arrangements for consulting the Data Protection Registrar during the planning stage of any initiative involving the collection, use or disclosure of personal data; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence is aware of its responsibilities under the Data Protection Act 1984 and will ensure that it continues to consult the Data Protection Registrar where necessary.

ROF Pembrey

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what action was taken by his Department to ensure that the land of the former royal ordnance factory at Pembrey, Llanelli, was before it was sold, free from any contamination caused by the production and testing of explosives and caused by the disposal of unused explosives;

(2) what restrictions were placed by his Department upon the purchaser of the land of the former royal ordnance factory at Pembrey, Llanelli, regarding the use or the further disposal of that land;

(3) when he disposed of the land and buildings of the former royal ordnance factory of Pembrey, Llanelli; and to whom;

(4) when the manufacture and production of explosives and all other related activities ceased at the former royal ordnance factory at Pembrey, Llanelli;

(5) when his Department was consulted by Llanelli borough council as to the procedures to be adopted for the removal of any contamination from the land of the former royal ordnance factory, Pembrey, Llanelli.

Mr. Aitken: The production of explosives at the Royal Ordnance factory at Pembrey ceased upon its closure towards the end of 1964. On 10 June 1965, 96·682 acres of freehold land there were sold to Westcol Construction. In the same year a further 516·5 acres of leasehold land reverted to the lessors, the Forestry Commission. We have no record that any restrictions were placed on the purchaser regarding the use of future disposal of the land. Due to the considerable lapse in time since the disposal of this site, we no longer have detailed records of the extent of clearance and decontamination work which was carried out on the land prior to its sale. However, our records indicate that action was taken, and that responsibility for clearance of the freehold site passed to Westcol Construction upon sale, in line with our normal policy. Following the site's sale, clearance of unexploded ordnance was carried out on two occasions: the first in 1977, the second in the period 1983-85, on each occasion following written approaches from the Llanelli borough council. We have no record of any approach from the council regarding procedures to be adopted for the removal of any chemical contamination. Responsibility for the land now rests with Llanelli borough council which I understand, has recently commissioned a contamination survey to be carried out on the site.

RAF Contracts

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the numbers of companies which now hold contracts for engineering, mechanical and communications work in the Royal Air Force and of those the number which have made significant training provision to ensure that adequate levels of skill will continue to be available.

Mr. Aitken: There are currently in excess of 3,000 companies holding contracts for work in aid of the Royal Air Force, a high proportion of which companies are likely to be involved in engineering, mechanical and communications work. To isolate these would not be possible without disproportionate cost and effort. All companies are required to possess and to have demonstrated adequate levels of skills for the work in question before my Department is prepared to place contracts with them. The training provisions necessary are a matter for the companies concerned.

Naval Support Command

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce his decision on the location of the Naval Support Command.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We expect the new Naval Support Command to be located in the Bath area. A final decision should be announced before the end of the year.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Dolphins

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to support a ban on deliberate dolphin encirclement by EC nationals and within EC waters.

Mr. Curry: The deliberate encirclement of dolphins in order to catch the yellow fin tuna with which they shoal is a practice carried out by purse-seine fishermen in the eastern tropical Pacific. This method is not used by the

United Kingdom fleet or, as far as is known, by the fleets of other member states, none of which fish for yellow fin tuna in that area.

Milk Products

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will detail the difference between MAFF News release 177/92, "Imports of Milk and Milk Products by the Milk Marketing Boards", and 177/92 (amended version) both issued on 29 May 1992; and how many copies of each were issued.

Mr. Curry: MAFF news release 177/92 of 29 May 1992 stated in Notes to Editors that
"regulations have been issued for consultation"
etc. In MAFF news release 177/92 (amended version) of 29 May 1992 this phrase was replaced by
"regulations will be issued for consultation".
The first version was based on an early draft and issued inadvertently.

In order to ensure that the correct position was widely understood the amended version was issued to the same list of recipients. This list consisted of 335 addressees on the MAFF press office specialist "milk" list and 337 addresses on the Maff press office general list. Both versions were also transmitted electronically to 200 media outlets.

Sea Mammals

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to review the system to monitor incidental catches of cetaceans and other mammal wildlife in United Kingdom fishing nets.

Mr. Curry: We are keeping the system under review.

Caseous Lymphadenitis

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if caseous lymphadenitis of sheep and goats is a notifiable disease; and what is the number of cases recorded in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Soames: Since caseous lymphadenitis is not a notifiable disease, comprehensive data are not maintained.

The disease was confirmed in six goat herds in 1990 and eight sheep flocks in 1991. Movement controls were applied on 28 March 1990 to the goat herds and in June and July 1991 to the sheep flocks under the Movement of Animals (Restrictions) Order 1990. Policy on caseous lymphadenitis was subsequently reviewed and in September 1991 all restrictions were lifted.

Swine Influenza

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *254*, whether he intends to make swine influenza a notifiable disease.

Mr. Soames: I have no plans to do so.

Fraud

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what effect the reforms of the common agricultural policy will have on the level of criminal fraud in the EC agricultural sector.

Mr. Curry: CAP reform will significantly reduce expenditure on export refunds and intervention and which will reduce the scope for fraud in these areas. The reform package will, however, introduce new measures. We will need to examine all the legislative proposals carefully to ensure that they contain control measures to minimise the risk of fraud. The United Kingdom will continue to keep up the pressure for action to reduce fraud in the EC agricultural sector.

Peak National Park

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what contact he has had with the Peak national park or local farmers and moorland owners following the recent fires which have destroyed hundreds of acres of environmentally sensitive areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: My officials have been in discussion with the owners and tenants to assess the effects of the fires on land under management agreements in the North Peak ESA.

Dredging

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy for the material dredged from ports and fairways in England to be used for combating coastal erosion on certain beaches and mudflats.

Mr. Curry: It is already the Government's policy to encourage such use wherever practicable.

MacSharry Proposals

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the increase in staff required in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the European Commission to implement and monitor the MacSharry proposals.

Mr. Curry: The staff numbers required to implement the CAP reform measures will depend on the precise terms of the detailed EC regulations which have yet to be agreed.

Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 18 May, *Official Report*, column *26*, if he will state *(a)* the numbers of mice, marmosets, goats, cattle, sheep and pigs that were infected, *(b)* the number that developed spongiform encephalopathy subsequently, *(c)* the ages of the animals at infection, *(d)* the ages of the animals at death, *(e)* the source of the infection material and its likely infective potency and *(f)* the mode of infection.

Mr. Soames: I shall write to the hon. Member shortly.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

School Playing Fields

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much of the Sports Council's grant aid has been earmarked for the purposes of identifying and listing the current stock of school playing fields.

Mr. Key: The Sports Council's grant-in-aid for 1991-92 included a specific sum of £0·5 million to cover the cost of preparing a national register of all playing fields in England, including schools.

HEALTH

Dentistry

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of dental practices in the constituency of Crewe and Nantwich accepting all patients under the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not available. A survey in September 1991 of a 20 per cent. sample of dentists on Cheshire family health services authority's dental list suggested that some 87 per cent. of dentists were accepting all NHS patients and 92 per cent. were accepting particular groups of NHS patients.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dental practices in the constituency of Crewe and Nantwich were treating NHS patients only in the years *(a)* 1985-86, *(b)* 1990-91 and *(c)* 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not available. Dentists are free to practise privately and are not required to inform any authority about the number of their private patients.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the number, total income generated and average cost of revenue generating courses of dental treatment *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in each National Health Service region for the years 1988 to 1991.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not available on a regional basis.

The table shows for England the number of courses of adult dental treatment which generated charge revenue, the charge revenue obtained and the average cost per course of adult treatment for the years 1988-89 and 1989-90. This information is not available for 1990-91 or 1991-92.

	Number of courses	*Charge revenue*	*Average cost per course of adult treatment*
1988-89	20,410,940	£295,991,730	£28·74
1989-90	19,033,840	£369,811,560	£30·49

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dental practices there are in the constituency of Crewe and Nantwich.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information is not collected in the form requested. There are currently 350 dentists on Cheshire family health services authority's dental list.

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of dentists received a gross income of over £140,000 in 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney: Some 10 per cent. of dentists in England and Wales received a gross NHS income of over £140,000 in 1991-92.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists have left the NHS since the introduction of the new dental contract.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since the introduction of the new dental contract in October 1990, there has been a net increase of 52 dentists practising in the general dental services in England. At 31 March 1992 there were 15,532 dentists, 29 per cent. more than in 1979.

Residential Care

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to set up a forum of organisations with an interest in residential care.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Ms. Prentice) on 5 June at column *670*.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to develop a post-qualifying award geared to residential care.

Mr. Yeo: Responsibility for promoting training in social work lies with the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW). CCETSW is currently developing a post-qualifying framework for social work staff, with funding from the Department, and from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Within the framework, CCETSW will offer post-qualifying and advanced awards to social workers, including residential social workers, who meet the required standards.

We shall be considering the qualification and training needs of staff working in residential care, in consultation with CCETSW, as part of our response to Sir William Utting's report, "Children in Public Care" published last year and to the recently published report of the residential staffs inquiry chaired by Lady Howe.

Continuing Care Beds

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received on the provision of continuing care beds within the national health service.

Mr. Yeo: The issue has been raised in a number of parliamentary questions, in letters from hon. Members and members of the public, and in correspondence and discussion with several organisations concerned with the care of elderly people.

Plymouth Community Services Trust

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she intends to take following the resignation of the director of finance and dismissal of the chief executive of the Plymouth community services trust after six weeks of operation.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is not necessary for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to take any action. The appointment of the executive directors is the responsibility of the trust board.

NHS Trusts (Pensions)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what safeguards are in place to protect the pensions of NHS staff employed by NHS trusts; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Membership of the NHS pension scheme is open to all NHS staff, including those employed

by NHS trusts. Pensions paid by the scheme, which is notionally funded, are guaranteed under statutory provisions.

Cancer

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the average cancer mortality rates in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: The figures are as follows:

Age-standardised death rates per million population from malignant cancer (ICD's 140-208) by sex, 1981 to 1990, England and Wales.

Year	Males All ages	Females All ages
1981	2,863	2,393
1982	2,861	2,414
1983	2,934	2,436
1984	3,008	2,563
1985	3,020	2,592
1986	2,895	2,524
1987	2,871	2,541
1988	2,879	2,554
1989	2,840	2,570
1990	2,827	2,527

Note: For 1986 onwards the death rates exclude deaths under 28 days.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Land Tenure

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the method of land tenure of each dependent territory.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The methods of land tenure in all the United Kingdom's Dependent Territories with a resident population, apart from the St. Helena dependencies of Ascension Islands and Tristan da Cunha, are freehold, leasehold and Crown land. No formal system of land tenure exists in Tristan da Cunha and all land belongs to the Crown. Occupation and use of land depends on local custom and practice. Ascension Island has Crown land only.

Yasin Gulamnbi Ravat

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the British High Commission in Bombay will issue a visit visa to Yasin Gulamnbi Ravat, whose date of birth is 1 June 1968, to enter the United Kingdom as a professional cricketer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the absence of any information about this case, I have asked the deputy high commission in Bombay for a full report. I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a substantive reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as soon as possible.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek support for a United Nations intervention if the Serbian Government continue with their arms build-up threatening Kosovo; and if he will support the principle of self-determination of the people of Kosovo.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A recent CSCE mission found no evidence of increased military tension in Kosovo. We are committed to the ten principles of the Helsinki Final Act, including those of equal rights and self determination of peoples, and we condemn the Serbian Government's oppression in Kosovo. This problem, and others in the former Yugoslavia are being addressed not in the United Nations but in Lord Carrington's conference. We fully support Lord Carrington's efforts. All parties must negotiate in his conference in good faith.

Kuwait

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures are being undertaken by Her Majesty's Government to persuade the Kuwaiti Government to speed up the democratisation of Kuwait.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: During his visit to Kuwait on 15 and 16 May my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed with the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister, Sheikh Salem, the elections due in October. Preparations are well in hand, and we wish them well.

Hong Kong

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what emergency evacuation plans exist for Kowloon, the New Territories and the inhabited islands of the Crown territories of Hong Kong in the event of a major breach of container accident at the proposed Daya bay nuclear plant in Guangdong; what practice exercises have been carried out for the emergency plans; and what insurance provisions exist for property and land owners in Hong Kong against any loss posed by such radioactive release.

Mr. Goodlad: Hong Kong has a full contingency plan in case of an accident at the Daya bay plant. The only inhabited area within 20 kilometers of the plant is Ping Chau island. In accordance with general international practice, Hong Kong is therefore planning for the possible evacuation only of this island and surrounding waters. The contingency plan was thoroughly tested in November 1990 with IAEA observers. In the event of a radioactive release, anyone whose land or property in Hong Kong was affected would be entitled to claim compensation from the plant's operator under arrangements approved by the Chinese Government.

Sinai

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current United Kingdom contribution to the United Nations observer force in Sinai; if he has any plans to change the level of contributions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The British contingent to the multinational force and observers (MFO) in Sinai is 32 men. We have told signatories of the 1981 protocol establishing the MFO that we aim to end our present commitment in October 1992.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the maximum period of time that could be allowed for Danish ratification of the Maastricht treaty before the need for re-negotiation arose.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Treaty of European Union does not provide for any time limit on ratification. Article R states:

"This Treaty shall enter into force on 1 January 1993, provided that all the instruments of ratification have been deposited, or, failing that, on the first day of the month following the deposit of the instrument of ratification by the last signatory State to take this step."

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to seek a re-negotiation of the Maastricht treaty if the Danish Government have not been able to proceed with ratification within one year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The conclusions issued by European Community Foreign Ministers after their meeting in Oslo on 4 June stated:

"Ministers noted that all eleven member states expressed their wish to see the European Union established by all member states. They exclude any reopening of the text signed at Maastricht."

We agreed that the door should be left open for Denmark. No time limit was set.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs under what circumstances he would seek a re-negotiation of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The conclusions issued by European Community Foreign Ministers after their meeting in Oslo on 4 June stated:

"Ministers noted that all eleven member states expressed their wish to see the European Union established by all member states. They exclude any reopening of the text signed at Maastricht."

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, column *358*, if he will give the expenditure by his Department on press and public relations for the United Kingdom audience in each year from 1983-84 to 1992-93, budget provision.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Total expenditure by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on press and public relations for the United Kingdom audience in 1990-91, latest estimates for 1991-92 and budget provisions for 1992-93 are in £ thousands:

United Kingdom information material and related activities	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Diplomatic wing	377	430	645
ODA wing	380	501	710
Total	757	931	1,355

Figures for the years preceding 1990-91 are not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

World Summit for Children

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Government intend to publish their follow-up report to the World Summit for Children.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom's national follow-up report to the World Summit for Children will be published as a Command paper on 24 June 1992. A copy will be placed in the House of Commons Library and it will be generally available through HMSO.

A copy of the report was sent to the UNICEF secretariat in New York at the end of February 1992; we were among the first countries to present a national report.

Footwear Imports

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government will be supporting the EC proposals for controls on footwear imports from China.

Mr. Needham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 2 June to the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms. Anderson), *Official Report*, column *491*. As regards representations, my Department have received a large number which divide basically between United Kingdom footwear manufacturers who support the Commission's proposal and United Kingdom importers and retailers who oppose it. The Government will take into account these conflicting views when deciding their attitude to the proposal, the economic justification for which has yet to be properly explained by the Commission.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Karamjit Singh Chahal

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement as to why Karamjit Singh Chahal is held in Her Majesty's prison, Bedford; and why he is under threat of deportation.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The decision to deport Mr. Chahal was taken in August 1990 on the grounds that his deportation was conducive to the public good for reasons of national security and other reasons of a political nature, namely the international fight against terrorism. These grounds arise from Mr. Chahal's involvement in terrorism in this country and abroad. My right hon. and learned Friend recently reviewed the case and has confirmed that the deportation order should stand and that in view of the reasons for his deportation Mr. Chahal should continue to be detained pending the implementation of the order or his voluntary departure from the United Kingdom.

Asylum Seekers

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers *(a)* were placed in detention in 1991 and *(b)* were in detention in each month from January to May 1992, by country of origin, by length of detention and by application at port or in country.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is not available in the form requested, but the table shows a breakdown, as

at 31 May 1992, of the number of asylum seekers who had been detained for one month or more. Figures in brackets relate to in-country applications. The remainder will have claimed asylum on arrival.

Political asylum applicants detained 31 May 1992

Nationality	1–2 months		2–6 months		6–12 months		Over 12 months		Totals	
Angola	3	(1)	7	(2)	—		—		10	(3)
Algeria	—		2	—	1	—	—		3	—
Bangladesh	—		—		1	(1)	—		1	(1)
Chile	—		1	(1)	—		—		1	(1)
Colombia	2	(1)	1	(1)	1	—	—		4	(2)
Cyprus	—		1	—	—		—		1	—
Ethiopia	1	(1)	—		—		—		1	(1)
Gabon	—		1	—	—		—		1	—
Ghana	5	(5)	5	(4)	4	(3)	1	(1)	15	(13)
Haiti	—		1	(1)	—		—		1	(1)
India	16	—	19	(1)	7	(1)	—		42	(2)
Iran	—		3	(3)	—		—		3	(3)
Ivory Coast	—		—		2	(2)	—		2	(2)
Jamaica	1	—	1	—	—		—		2	—
Jordan	—		—		1	—	—		1	—
Kenya	1	(1)	—		—		—		1	(1)
Lebanon	5	(5)	—		—		—		5	(5)
Mauritius	—		1	—	—		—		1	—
Morocco	1	(1)	1	—	1	—	—		3	(1)
Namibia	—		1	(1)	—		—		1	(1)
Nigeria	2	(2)	17	(7)	3	(2)	3	(1)	25	(12)
Pakistan	3	—	3	—	1	—	—		7	—
Peru	—		—		1	—	—		1	—
Sierra Leone	—		—		—		1	—	1	—
Sri Lanka	—		—		1	—	1	—	2	—
Turkey	6	(1)	3	(1)	1	—	—		10	(2)
Uganda	—		3	(2)	1	(1)	—		4	(3)
Zaire	8	(8)	24	(6)	8	(6)	1	—	41	(20)
Zimbabwe	—		—		1	(1)	—		1	(1)
TOTALS	54	(26)	95	(30)	35	(17)	7	(2)	191	(75)

Prisoners

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of prisoners released in each of the last 20 years from prisons in the United Kingdom has subsequently received further custodial sentences; what proportion of those starting a prison term in 1991, or the latest year for which statistics are available, had previously served a custodial sentence; and whether he will give consideration to including recidivism rates in future issues of criminal statistics.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The readily available information on further custodial sentences relates to the proportion of prisoners (excluding fine defaulters and non-criminal prisoners) released from prison service establishments in England and Wales who are committed to custody under sentence within two years of discharge. It is published annually in Prison statistics, England and Wales. Tables 9.3, 9.7 and 9.10 of the 1989 issue (Cm. 1221) provide information for those prisoners discharged in 1976-86, and tables 8.2, 8.4 and 8.6 of the 1978 issue (Cm. 7626) provide information for those prisoners discharged in 1971-75 (Cm. 7626).

Provisional figures show that 21 per cent. of those received into prison service establishments in 1991 under an immediate custodial sentence were known to have served a previous custodial sentence. However, this represents 46 per cent. of such prisoners for whom information about previous custodial sentences was available.

The offenders index yields information on criminal careers; more general reconviction rates can be found in Home Office Statistical Bulletins 35/87 Criminal careers of those born in 1953: persistent offenders and desistance (tables 2, 3, 9 and 10), 32/89 Criminal and custodial careers of those born in 1953, 1958 and 1963 (tables 2, 4, 5 and 7) and 21/91 Life licensees and restricted offenders reconvictions: England and Wales 1989 (tables 1 and 2) copies of which are in the Library.

Trespass

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to amend section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986, to allow it to be used against trespassing on common land.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The primary purpose of section 39 is to restore to an occupier the use of land of which he has been temporarily deprived by trespassers. It is applicable to all land, other than a highway. Given its purpose, it would not be appropriate to extend sections 39 to cover common land where there is no deprived occupier.

Review Group

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when the inter-departmental review group on the transfer of sentenced prisoners was set up; and what were its terms of reference;

(2) when the inter-departmental review group on the transfer of sentenced prisoners is expected to conclude its report.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My noble Friend Lord Ferrers announced the review in another place on 4 June 1991.

Its terms of reference were:

(1) To consider the operation of the statutory and other provisions governing the transfer of prisoners between United Kingdom jurisdictions; to identify difficulties and relevant considerations; and to recommend possible ways in which practice might be changed or the provisions amended to overcome or minimise these difficulties.

(2) To consider possible improvements to the procedures for agreeing and effecting transfers of prisoners between United Kingdom jurisdictions.

(3) To consider any improvements that could be made to assist families in visiting prisoners in other United Kingdom jurisdictions.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is considering a report of the review with colleagues in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the average length of time spent in police cells by remand prisoners within the Merseyside police authority area; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the number of remand prisoners held in police cells within the Merseyside police authority area for each of the last three years; what is the total number of transfers between police stations of such remand prisoners for each of those years; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list the total number of prisoners held in police cells within the Merseyside police authority area for each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information about the length of time individual remand prisoners are held in police cells and the transfer of those prisoners between police stations is not collected centrally. Data on the number of prisoners held by the Merseyside police were available centrally only from October 1990 and the table shows the total number of prisoners held on the last Friday of each month since then. The information does not enable remand prisoners to be distinguished from sentenced prisoners, but most would have been held on remand.

Date	*Number of prisoners*
25 October 1990	56
21 November 1990	61
21 December 1990	34
25 January 1991	53
22 February 1991	59
28 March 1991	39
26 April 1991	49
31 May 1991	36
28 June 1991	25
26 July 1991	43
30 August 1991	49
27 September 1991	79
25 October 1991	70
29 November 1991	75
20 December 1991	72
31 January 1992	74
28 February 1992	89
27 March 1992	97
24 April 1992	85
29 May 1992	63

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the number of remand prisoners held in police cells; how many such prisoners are currently being held in the police cells of the Merseyside police authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have received a number of representations about the use of police cells to hold both remand and newly sentenced prisoners in Merseyside and elsewhere. On Wednesday 10 June, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 76 prisoners in police cells in Merseyside, of whom nine were convicted and 67 unconvicted. As I have made clear on a number of occasions, I regard the resolution of this problem as a matter of priority for the Prison Service, but I have no control over the number of people remanded in or sentenced to custody.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will outline the steps he is taking to ensure that remand prisoners being held in police cells are provided with *(a)* adequate exercise, *(b)* educational facilities, *(c)* visiting facilities, *(d)* regular contact with legal representatives and *(e)* segregation from convicted prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The facilities available to prisoners, and the conditions under which they are held in police cell accommodation are matters for the chief officer of the force concerned. The prison service provides for each force an experienced liaison prison governor to give advice to the police on the regulations and conditions which apply in prisons so that these can be reflected in the management of prisoners in police cells.

It is inevitable, given the size and complexity of the present operation, that facilities and conditions will vary from place to place. Police cells are not designed to hold prisoners for long periods, but I have been impressed by the efforts made by police officers to adapt practices and local conditions to suit the needs of prisoners.

Police Numbers

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the increase in police establishment numbers and the increase in actual numbers of police officers for each county since 1979.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is given in the table, which includes combined county forces and joint metropolitan areas, as well as single shire county forces. The establishment figures include the increases approved with effect from 1 April 1992. The strength figures as between May 1979 and 31 March 1992 are:

	Increase in establishment 1979 to 1992	*Increase in strength 1979 to 1992*
Avon and Somerset	234	252
Bedfordshire	231	193
Cambridgeshire	149	179
Cheshire	115	87
Cleveland	91	130
Cumbria	99	115
Derbyshire	141	119
Devon and Cornwall	255	231
Dorset	138	149
Durham	40	77
Dyfed-Powys	35	34
Essex	425	408
Gloucestershire	68	93

	Increase in establishment 1979 to 1992	Increase in strength 1979 to 1992
Greater Manchester	342	621
Gwent	35	38
Hampshire	315	256
Hertfordshire	151	240
Humberside	95	165
Kent	316	344
Lancashire	111	105
Leicestershire	147	144
Lincolnshire	24	21
Merseyside	255	180
Norfolk	181	185
Northamptonshire	240	249
Northumbria	288	179
North Wales	90	78
North Yorkshire	90	61
Nottinghamshire	199	211
South Wales	99	223
South Yorkshire	279	448
Staffordshire	149	196
Suffolk	145	141
Surrey	74	264
Sussex	212	225
Thames Valley	815	1,119
Warwickshire	144	147
West Mercia	219	282
West Midlands	468	910
West Yorkshire	191	348
Wiltshire	159	220
City of London	[1] −224	−24
Metropolitan Police	1,733	5,974

[1] The authorised establishment was reduced at request of the City of London Police in 1983.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the grades of the staff employed in C3 division of the Home Office.

Mr. Jack: On 1 June 1992 the grades of the staff employed in C3 division was as follows:

	Number
Grade 5	1
Grade 7	8
Higher executive officer	19
Executive officer	12
Administrative officer	9
Administrative assistant	3
Personal secretary	3

Prosecution Failures

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases failed to be prosecuted in the last year on record because of a failure to do so within six months.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not collected centrally.

Marianela Gonzales

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to reply to a letter dated 20 April from the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness concerning the health of Marianela Gonzales, a prisoner in Her Majesty's prison, Styal.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 5 June 1992]:* A reply has been sent to the hon. Member.

Car Theft

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to ensure that all teenagers convicted of car theft are compelled to undertake community work and not excused from this due to age.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 5 June 1992]:* Within the limits imposed by Parliament, it is for the courts to decide on the appropriate sentence in the light of the information available to them. The Criminal Justice Act 1991 strengthens the community sentences, including community service, available to the court, and reinforces the principle that courts should be able to choose the sentence that is most suitable for the offender having regard to the seriousness of the offence.

In the light of the wide range of sentencing options available for people convicted of car theft, including custody, community sentences and financial penalties, we have no plans to curtail courts' discretion by introducing a mandatory sentence for this type of offence.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Berkshire Plants, Newtownards

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 26 February, *Official Report*, column *505*, what plant has been transferred to England from the Berkshire plants in Newtownards; how much of this plant and machinery was grant aided; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Although I cannot give information on details of plant which belongs to the company, I am aware that some of the equipment involved has been transferred from the site. I can confirm that cessation of production of hosiery at Newtownards has given rise to possible repayment of grant and discussions are continuing with the company.

I am encouraged that although it has ceased hosiery manufacture in Northern Ireland, the company has made very positive proposals for the future development in Newtownards.

Aquatic Environment

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the responsibilities and duties of his Department and any agency which reports to his Department in relation to inshore waters, intertidal areas and maritime land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the Government's memorandum on this subject which was submitted to the Environment Committee of this House in the last Session. It has now been published by HMSO as part of the Environment Committee's report on Coastal Zone Protection and Planning Volume II, Minutes of Evidence and Appendices.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what additional resources will be made available to district councils to offset the increased cost of applying the new environmental protection legislation.

Mr. Atkins: There has not been any recent environmental protection legislation which would impose additional financial burdens on district councils. However, the Government proposes to introduce legislation as soon as possible on new powers to control litter. At that time, consideration will be given to whether any additional resources should be made available.

Empty Housing

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of the public housing stock, in each Housing Executive district in Northern Ireland, is lying vacant.

Mr. Atkins: The chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has advised me that at 31 March 1992 the proportion of public housing stock lying vacant in each Housing Executive district was as follows:

District	*Vacant stock*	*Gross stock*	*Per cent.*
Antrim	271	5,129	5·28
Armagh	73	3,992	1·83
Ballycastle	7	1,544	0·46
Ballymena	136	5,550	2·45
Ballymoney	38	2,851	1·34
Banbridge	46	3,151	1·46
Bangor	23	4,174	0·56
Belfast 1	209	3,996	5·23
Belfast 2	199	5,701	3·49
Belfast 3	202	5,180	3·90
Belfast 4	547	5,194	0·54
Belfast 5	431	5,906	7·30
Belfast 6	282	5,210	5·42
Belfast 7	176	6,379	2·76
Carrickfergus	124	3,680	3·37
Castlereagh 1	30	3,766	0·80
Castlereagh 2	11	2,726	0·41
Coleraine	212	5,628	3·77
Cookstown	28	2,134	1·32
Craigavon	187	2,138	8·75
Downpatrick	121	4,545	2·67
Dungannon	64	3,547	1·81
Fermanagh	65	4,073	1·60
Larne	65	2,730	2·38
Limavady	16	2,884	0·56
Lisburn 1	88	4,948	1·78
Lisburn 2	46	2,681	1·72
Lisburn 3	36	3,099	1·17
Londonderry 1	67	4,237	1·59
Londonderry 2	82	4,291	1·91
Londonderry 3	15	3,933	0·39
Lurgan	102	3,027	3·37
Magherafelt	4	2,733	0·15
Newry 1	43	3,365	1·28
Newry 2	46	3,940	1·17
Newtownabbey 1	180	4,061	4·43
Newtownabbey 2	144	3,842	3·74
Newtownards 1	72	3,940	1·83
Newtownards 2	19	2,073	0·92
Omagh	52	3,474	1·50
Portadown	137	2,864	4·79
Strabane	25	4,055	0·62
Northern Ireland total	4,721	162,371	2·91

Cancer

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average cancer mortality rate in Northern Ireland for each year over the past 10 years.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Rate per 100,000 of population

Year	
1982	192
1983	198
1984	203
1985	201
1986	201
1987	208
1988	212
1989	221
1990	117

Figures for 1991 are not yet available.

Roads

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total length of roadway maintained by each district office of the Department of Environment roads service; and if he will give details for each category of roadway.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is as follows:

DOE (NI) Road service division	*Class 1 (A category) Kms*	*Class 2 (B category) Kms*	*Class 3 (C category) Kms*	*Unclassified Kms*	*Totals*
Ballymena	401·4	446·8	663·5	1,764·1	3,275·8
Belfast	157·2	122·0	114·4	1,287·4	1,681·0
Coleraine	374·9	522·1	550·3	1,832·8	3,280·1
Craigavon	445·5	564·7	1,030·3	3,034·5	5,075·0
Downpatrick	419·3	330·7	597·8	1,822·5	3,170·3
Omagh	525·0	888·6	1,762·0	4,507·7	7,683·3

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has for a comprehensive review of the state of the rural roads network in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: Comprehensive inspections, assessment and procedure in respect of rural roads are already in place.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total budget allocated to each district office of the Department of the Environment roads service for *(a)* minor works, *(b)* major works, *(c)* maintenance and *(d)* other expenses in each of the last five years.

Mr. Atkins: Budget allocations are made primarily on a divisional basis. The allocations in each of the last five years were as follows:

£ thousand

	[1] Roads Service Headquarters	Ballymena	[2] Belfast	Coleraine	Craigavon	Downpatrick	Omagh
1987-88							
Minor works	—	1,341	1,480	1,271	1,174	1,401	1,382
Major works	690	1,071	3,169	1,821	1,784	890	793
Maintenance	1,032	7,715	13,398	7,494	10,124	11,167	10,653
Other expenses	19,908	855	4,504	1,653	1,789	2,057	2,002
1988-89							
Minor works	—	1,078	1,399	1,147	1,057	1,307	1,306
Major works	1,755	3,063	1,999	986	1,844	1,827	694
Maintenance	186	7,796	13,867	8,069	10,300	11,443	11,380
Other expenses	22,663	909	4,630	1,216	1,726	2,513	1,720
1989-90							
Minor works	—	1,403	1,696	1,481	1,455	1,371	1,578
Major works	100	1,895	6,652	1,298	1,233	2,217	3,144
Maintenance	1,345	8,897	15,285	9,599	11,087	12,919	13,092
Other expenses	22,610	855	4,419	1,695	1,749	2,693	1,773
1990-91							
Minor works	—	1,476	1,922	1,483	1,833	1,588	1,691
Major works	35	1,533	5,041	1,102	1,326	2,810	3,412
Maintenance	598	10,070	17,056	10,194	12,455	13,638	14,563
Other expenses	23,627	973	3,676	1,999	1,708	2,613	1,802
1991-92							
Minor works	—	1,328	1,552	1,320	1,469	1,317	1,327
Major works	—	2,316	8,807	1,819	2,817	2,993	1,606
Maintenance	512	9,494	15,855	9,920	11,459	12,542	13,050
Other expenses	26,533	1,178	3,699	1,157	2,124	2,652	1,637

Notes: [1] Roads Service Headquarters handles a number of budget matters centrally, including specific major works and maintenance functions.
[2] The major works allocation for Belfast Division for the years 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 includes expenditure on the Belfast Cross Harbour Road Bridge.

European Community Funding

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all EC funding initiatives indicating those for which Northern Ireland is eligible and those which Northern Ireland avails of.

Mr. Mates: The European Commission has adopted the following initiatives financed by the structural funds, in accordance with article 11 of regulations (EEC) 4253/88.

INTEREREG—(assistance to border areas)
STRIDE—(research and technological development)
ENVIREG—(environmental improvement)
PRISMA—(assistance to firms)
TELEMATIQUE—(promotion of telecommunications service)
EUROFORM—(qualifications for women)
HORIZON—(handicapped and certain disadvantaged groups)
LEADER—(rural development)
RETEX—(diversification of textile areas)
REGEN—(energy networks)
RECHAR—(coal areas)
REGIS—(remote regions)

As an objective 1 area, Northern Ireland is eligible for assistance under the first 10 of these initiatives and has been allocated funding under 9; funding under RETEX is not due to commence until 1993 and decisions on which areas will benefit have still to be taken.

Community Organisations

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which community organisations, providing facilities or services for the disabled and handicapped, received grant aid from each health and social service board; and how much grant is available in each case.

Mr. Hanley: The table sets out the grant aid given in 1990-91 by the health and social services boards to those voluntary organisations whose help and services are specifically directed at people with disabilities. It does not include grant-aided schemes which are not specifically targeted but which may nevertheless benefit some disabled people.

Grant aid for community organisations from health and social services boards

Organisation	*Amount*
EASTERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD	
Age Concern (Carers Relief Scheme)	1,050
Arthritis Care (North Belfast)	100
Arthritis Care (West Belfast)	420
Arthritis Care (West Belfast)	300
Avondale	19,859
Ballymurphy Handicapped Association	900
Beech Hall Carers Group	178
Beech hall Night Hall for Disabled	1,309
Blind Centre (NI)	6,000
Blind Centre (NI)	9,000
British Epilepsy Association	10,000
Brook Children Together Handicapped Club	550
Carers National Association	231
Chest Heart and Stroke Association	5,748
Christian Concern (Mental Handicap)	82,000
Croft Community	13,500
Crossroads Care Attendant Scheme (CCAS)	21,125
CCAS	39, 564
CCAS (Down)	2,200
CCAS (EB&C)	15,014
CCAS (Lisburn)	14,928
CCAS (Lisburn)	18,072
CCAS (ND&A)	12,653
CCAS (ND&A)	21,843
CCAS (N&W Belfast)	23,556
CCAS (N&W Belfast) EIA House	33,294
CCAS (South Belfast)	18,302
Deaf Club (Down/Lisburn)	270

Organisation	Amount
Dympna House	15,000
East Belfast Talking Newspaper	150
Eating Disorders Association	1,202
Everton Parents	200
Extra Care	40,000
Extra Care Dementia	134,305
Extra Care Night Nursing Service	197,200
Fold Carers Relief Scheme	12,875
Friends of Clinbrook Home	1,250
Friends of Hillhall	2,000
Gateway (Turf Lodge)	400
Gateway (Ballydownfine)	50
Gateway (Lisburn)	3,000
Gateway (North Belfast)	350
Glencraig Village Community	43,850
Grosvenor Hard of Hearing	1,291
Harmony Handicapped Group	330
Industrial Therapy Organisation	341,232
Leonard Cheshire Foundation	32,000
Lisburn Carers Group	330
Lower Falls Handicapped Association	18,875
Mencap	125,202
Mencap—Downpatrick Society	10,000
Muckamore Abbey Hospital Therapy	1,635
Multiple Sclerosis Society	26,900
Multiple Sclerosis Society	9,115
National Schizophrenia Fellowship	29,060
Newington Day Centre	55,000
NI Association for Mental Health	383,249
NI Institute for the Disabled	20,000
NI Music Therapy Trust	5,670
NI Music Therapy Trust	2,820
NI Music Therapy Trust	8,000
NICOD	69,390
North Belfast Hard of Hearing	45
Northern Ireland Council on disability	50
Northern Ireland Council on disability	46,000
Orchardville Society	35,622
Orchardville Work Scheme	53,494
Parkview Visually Handicapped Bowling Club	240
PHAB	20,000
PHAB Club (Shankill)	300
PHAB Saltshaker Club	745
Physically Disabled Advice Centre	28,508
PRAXIS	50,493
Richmond Fellowship	124,975
Ruby House	22,150
South Belfast Club for Visually Handicapped	125
South Belfast Taling Newspaper	262
Segal House Mothers & Toddlers	350
Shankill Parents & Friends	150
St. Hoseph's Centre for the Deaf	240
St. Katherine's Visually Handicapped	120
St. Patrick's Handicapped Association	1,110
St. Paul's Handicapped Care	624
Ulster Institute for the Deaf	7,500
Woodlands Visually Handicapped	70
Woodlands Hard of Hearing	110
Young Handicapped	109
NORTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD	
Barnardos—Home from Home	59,888
Blind Centre (N.I.)	18,000
Bridge Association	79,612
Catholic Institute for the Deaf	1,205
Charm Trust	79,430
Chest Heart and Stroke Association	12,150
Crossroads Care Attendant Scheme	87,250
Garryduff House	14,500
Industrial Therapy Organisation	38,363
Kilcreggan Homes	15,000
Lerwill House	2,000
Martin Residential Trust	30,000
National Schizophrenia Fellowship	56,000
N.I. Association for Mental Health	140,055
NICOD	96,104
PRAXIS	79,534
Rehability	37,500
Richmond Fellowship	22,000
Riding for the Disabled	1,000
Special Olympics	2,970
SOUTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD	
Armagh and District Association	571
Barnados "Willowgrove"	10,218
Barnados—Profoundly Handicapped	83,414
Coach House Restaurant	4,059
Crossroads Care Attendant Scheme (Banbridge)	19,375
CCAS (Craigavon)	13,125
CCAS (Dungannon)	3,500
CCAS (Dungannon)	10,000
Dungannon Access Group	104
Dungannon and District Association for the Handicapped	5,000
Dungannon and District Association for the Handicapped	14,329
Dungannon and District Talking Newspapers	50
Eating Disorders Association	567
Gateway (Mourne Stimulus)	686
Gateway (Newry)	1,882
Gateway (Newry)	6,300
Industrial Therapy Organisation	88,000
Keady and District Society	746
Lurgan and Brownlow M S	296
Mourne Grange Village Community	47,000
National Schizophrenia Fellowship	9,459
NI Association for Mental Health	104,000
Northern Ireland Council on Disability	7,698
On the Move	300
Out of Sight Club, Dungannon	70
PRAXIS	13,500
Richmond Fellowship	114,896
WESTERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD	
Cheshire Home	20,000
Chest Heart and Stroke Association	5,830
Disabled Peoples Community Transport	9,275
Eating Disorders Association	610
Gateway Club (Shantallow)	2,000
Industrial Therapy Organisation	74,000
National Schizophrenia Fellowship	9,475
Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health	69,900
PHAB	2,000
PRAXIS	49,750
Roe Valley Disability Action Group	1,500
Special Olympics	2,000
Talking Newspapers	650
Waterside Gateway Club	1,300

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which community organisations, providing facilities or services for the disabled and handicapped, received free health board transport; and what level of transport is available in each case.

Mr. Hanley: This information is not collected in the form requested. However, I understand that health and social services boards provide free transport to some 170 local voluntary groups throughout Northern Ireland whose main activity is the care of disabled or handicapped people but may also include elderly or mentally ill people. The level of assistance provided ranges from ad hoc arrangements to cover special trips and outings to regular provision of an agreed number of vehicles on set days each week. In some cases boards give cash grants to enable voluntary organisations to provide their own transport.

Water Rates

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing average water rates in Northern Ireland in each year since 1979 in cash and constant prices.

Mr. Mates: The provision of water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland is a function of central government and expenditure on these services is an element of the regional rate struck by the Department of Finance and Personnel. The regional rate is an unhypothecated tax and there is, therefore, no separate water rate for the years in question. However, since 1991-92 arrangements have been made to appropriate in aid of the water service vote the relevant share of regional rate income. This change has been made to facilitate transition to commercial accounting procedures. In 1991-92, the share of the regional rate appropriated in aid of the water service was £107 million equivalent to a poundage of 64·38 pence in the pound while for 1992-93 the figures are £114 million and 65·63 pence in the pound.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Footwear

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what representations he has received with regard to the proposal to impose EC quotas on imports from China of footwear;

(2) what steps he is taking effectively to control imports of footwear from China.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 2 June to the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms. Anderson), *Official Report*, column *491*. As regards representations, my Department have received a large number which divide basically between United Kingdom footwear manufacturers who support the Commission's proposal and United Kingdom importers and retailers who oppose it. The Government will take into account these conflicting views when deciding their attitude to the proposals, the economic justification for which has yet to be properly explained by the Commission.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's arrangements for consulting the Data Protection Registrar during the planning stage of any initiative involving the collection, use or disclosure of personal data; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Officials are aware of the need to consult the Registrar about proposed legislation or other initiatives which might affect or be affected by the Data Protection Act 1984, and will consult him as necessary when planning the collection, use or disclosure of automated personal data.

Non-fossil Fuel Obligation

Mr. Etherington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he proposes to announce the next non-fossil fuel obligation.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), *Official Report*, 18 May 1992, column *21*.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, column *497*, if he will give his Department's total 1992-93 budget for spending on advertising and other promotional material.

Mr. Eggar: Publicity budgets form part of the programmes to which they relate. Allocations for advertising and promotional material, as for other publicity expenditure, will be made as needed during the year.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, column *497*, if he will make a statement on the reasons for the fall in his Department's spending on advertising and promotional material between 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Eggar: I am pleased to say that the continued interest firms have shown in the Department's Enterprise Initiative consultancy scheme has been such that since the spring of 1991 further national advertising support has not been needed. As a result, the Department's publicity expenditure has been reduced. More than 100,000 applications for the consultancy scheme have now been received, and some 44,000 projects have been completed.

Cumbrian Economy

Mr. Hutton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to publish the report by Cambridge Economic Consultants into the future of the south and west Cumbrian economy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Squire: I have been asked to reply.

We are considering the consultants' report on the feasibility of setting up enterprise zones at Barrow and Whitehaven, in the light of the wider needs of the area. It is not the Department's practice to publish such reports. There is a statutory consultation procedure before any zones can be designated.

ENVIRONMENT

Energy Efficiency

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will establish an independent energy efficiency agency and a renewable energy agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: On 13 May the Government announced that they intended to form a partnership with British Gas and the regional electricity companies to establish an independent Energy Saving Trust to develop and propose new programmes to promote the efficient use of energy. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is considering future arrangements for the promotion of renewable energy as part of the current review of renewable energy strategy.

Planning Appeals

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of planning applications has been won on appeal since 1987.

Mr. Baldry: The information is as follows:

	Planning appeals allowed		
Year	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Appeals allowed as a proportion of total planning applications decided per cent.*
1987-88	6,955	37·6	1·5
1988-89	7,734	36·7	1·4
1989-90	8,852	33·4	1·7
1990-91	8,871	33·6	2·0
1991-92	7,590	33·7	[1]1·9

[1] Latest estimate.

London Docklands

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information the London Docklands development corporation collects on the number or proportion of the jobs attracted to the docklands urban development area that are *(a)* secured by local residents, *(b)* taken by those on the unemployment register and *(c)* taken by those that have participated in training schemes in the docklands area.

Mr. Redwood: I am advised that the London Docklands development corporation does not collect information in this form.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate total public expenditure to date on the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone including expenditure on land acquisition, reclamation and preparation, transport infrastructure including the docklands light railway and London Docklands development corporation and Department of Transport expenditure on road schemes and expenditure incurred by virtue of the business rate and 100 per cent. capital allowances provisions of the enterprise zone scheme.

Mr. Redwood: Up to the end of 1991-92, the London Docklands development corporation (LDDC) spent £217 million on projects within the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone. This is broken down as follows:

	£ million
Land acquisition	21
Land reclamation	14
Utilities and services	41
Industry support and community	1
Environmental improvements	12
Docklands light railway	40
Roads and other transport schemes	88
TOTAL	217

Up to the end of 1989-90, expenditure in respect of rate revenue foregone in the enterprise zone amounted to £38 million. Comparable figures for capital allowances are not available.

The Isle of Dogs enterprise zone also benefited from regeneration schemes, serving the wider Docklands urban development area. In addition, the Department of Transport contributed to the cost of the Docklands light railway, which serves the Isle of Dogs.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the latest available estimate of the total number of permanent jobs in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone that are in newly created businesses; and if he will give the source for his estimate.

Mr. Redwood: There was a net increase of some 26,000 jobs in Docklands between 1981 and 1990. There are no readily available figures of losses of jobs through failure or relocation.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how much land is owned by the developers Olympia and York in the London Docklands urban development area;

(2) how much land has been sold to date to the developers Olympia and York by the London Docklands development corporation.

Mr. Redwood: The London Docklands development corporation has sold 31 acres of land and 16 acres of water to Olympia and York. Olympia and York may also have acquired interests in other land in the urban development area.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his current estimate of the total amount and proportion of office and commercial floorspace in the London Docklands urban development area that is vacant or unlet.

Mr. Redwood: This information is not held centrally.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people have received training at the Poplar Baths construction training centre to date; and of these how many have secured employment on the Canary Wharf development and how many have secured employment on construction projects in the London docklands urban development area as a whole.

Mr. Redwood: A total of 407 people have successfully completed courses at the centre. Of these, 270 trainees have obtained employment, including 149 at the Canary Wharf development and an unspecified number on construction projects elsewhere in the urban development area.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his estimate of the number of jobs that have been attracted to the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone since its inception that have been taken by residents of *(a)* the London borough of Tower Hamlets and *(b)* the London boroughs of Newham and Southwark; and if he will provide the source for his estimate;

(2) if he will estimate the number of jobs that have been lost in the London Docklands urban development area since 1981 either through company failure or relocation; and if he will give the source for his estimate;

(3) if he will estimate the cost per job in relation to public expenditure for each job attracted to the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone since April 1982; and if he will give the basis for his estimate;

(4) if he will give the latest available estimate of the total number of permanent jobs in the Isle of Dogs

enterprise zone that are in companies that have relocated in the zone from elsewhere; and if he will give the source for his estimate.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend on 18 May.

Estate Action

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the estate action programme.

Mr. Baldry: The estate action programme now makes a major contribution to tackling the problems of run down local authority housing estates. Resources have increased from £268 million last year to £364 million this year. Local authorities will shortly be invited to submit proposals for new schemes to begin in 1993-94.

Homelessness

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department will publish its response to the twenty-second report from the Committee of Public Accounts on homelessness; and whether this will include the Housing Corporation's analysis of the affordability of housing projects undertaken under the new financial regime introduced by the Housing Act 1988.

Mr. Baldry: The Department's response to the Public Accounts Committee's report on homelessness was published last August in the form of a Treasury Minute (Cm 1617). It confirmed that the Housing Corporation would be monitoring outturn rents under the new financial regime. This is a continuing process which will inform annual reviews of grant rates.

Housing Grants

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the component elements used in determining grant rates for licensing associations; and if he will publish the assumptions on affordability adopted by his Department and the Housing Corporation in determining grant rates in each respective total cost indicator area and for different housing types.

Mr. Baldry: Grant rates for housing associations are proposed by the Housing Corporation and approved by the Secretary of State in the light of all relevant factors, including outturn rents on completed schemes. Rates are set for broad categories of type of scheme and location so as to enable associations generally to provide housing at rents within the reach of those in low-paid employment. The Government do not publish the underlying factors and assumptions, since it does not wish to imply a view as to what constitutes an affordable rent in any particular case. Outturn rents are for associations to determine and will be influenced by an association's assessment of suitable rent levels for a scheme as well as by its efficiency in managing development.

Housing Investment

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's latest estimate of the total amount of capital receipts likely to be available to local authorities for housing investment in 1992-93.

Mr. Baldry: Estimates of the availability of future capital receipts are inevitably uncertain. However, the department currently anticipates that local authorities in England will have access to some £1·6 billion of usable receipts to support capital investment across all services in 1992-93. decisions on spending from receipts on individual services such as housing are matters for authorities themselves.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has determined any order of priority in dealing with different areas of the country in regard to local government reorganisation; and what timetable he wishes the proposed commission on that subject to work to.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment gave on 3 June to the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Robinson), *Official Report*, column *546*.

Coastal Zone Protection

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has considered the recommendations of the Environment Select Committee's Second Report of 1991-92 on coastal zone protection and planning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Environment Select Committee report on Coastal Zone Protection and Planning was issued on 28 April. The Government intend to make a formal response to that report in early July.

EC Waste Directive

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment with what aspects of the draft EC directive on waste Her Majesty's Government do not agree.

Mr. Maclean: The draft Directive on the Landfilling of Waste was the subject of the Seventh Report of the Environment Committee of this House (HC 263-I, 17 July 1991) and the Government's views on the draft Directive are given in our response to that report (Command 1720, 5 February 1992). Copies of the report and the Government's response have been placed in the House Library.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received the current text of the draft EC directive on waste; when he now expects that it will be ratified; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The draft Directive on Landfilling of Waste was presented to the EC Council of Ministers by the European Commission on 22 May 1991. There have been no Council discussions and there is as yet no firm date for ratification.

East Thames Corridor

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the consultants examining potential for the future of the East Thames corridor to report; and when he expects the report to be published.

Mr. Baldry: The consultants are now working on the second stage of the study and this is due to be completed by about the end of July. We expect that a report on the completed study will be published in due course.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the terms of reference and geographical parameters given to the consultants commissioned to examine regeneration of the East Thames corridor.

Mr. Baldry: The terms of reference for this study require the consultants, Llewelyn Davies Planning, to assess the development capacity and potential of the East Thames corridor in the light of its transport and infrastructure requirements and the need for environmental protection and enhancement. The full terms of reference were published on 24 November 1991 and are available in the Library. For the purposes of the study a care area has been defined which includes Stratford, the Lower Lea Valley and the Royal Docks at the western end of the corridor and the areas on either side of the river extending eastwards to Tilbury in Essex and the Medway towns and Sheerness in Kent.

Local Government Commission

Dr. Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the cost, under broad headings, of the Local Government Commission.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Local Government Commission is to be financed by grant-in-aid payments from the Department of the Environment. Parliament has made provision of £1·63 million on class VIII of vote 9 for this purpose in 1992-93.

Water Rates

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing average water rates in England in each year since 1979 in cash and constant prices.

Mr. Maclean: The most complete available historical data on water charges is contained in "Waterfacts" published annually by the Water Services Association, copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library.

Dredging

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy for the material removed annually from the harbours and fairways of ports in England to be used in place of the sand and gravel dredged off the coast for use in the building industry instead of being dumped at sea.

Mr. Baldry: The majority of material dredged from harbours and ports is not suitable for use in the building industry. It would not be appropriate Government policy for material removed from harbours and ports to be used in place of sand and gravel dredged off the coast.

Minerals Planning Guidelines

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment further to his answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, column *377*, to the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) if he will list the names of those outside organisations and individuals who have sent in responses to his review of minerals planning guidelines.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave on 8 June at columns *23-24*.

Bath Bypass

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish his decision following the public inquiry into the Bath eastern bypass.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend hopes to announce his decision shortly, in conjunction with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

National Parks

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will review the procedures for closing national parks to walkers during periods of fire risk in dry weather.

Mr. Maclean: We have no plans to do so.

Halon Bank

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline his proposals for the establishment of a national halon bank; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My Department is currently involved in discussions with the producers and users of halons aimed at establishing what might be done to facilitate halon recycling and banking.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 15 June 1992

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Sudan

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications of the statement by Gaafar Mohammed Nimeri, the former President of Sudan, urging an armed uprising, for the United Kingdom's aid programme in the area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We closed down our development aid programme to Sudan in 1991 and have no plans to reinstate it. We shall continue to provide humanitarian aid to the Sudanese people according to needs and without political conditions.

United States (Visas)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received, since 1 January 1991, about *(a)* refusal of visas to United Kingdom citizens by the United States immigration authorities and *(b)* treatment of United Kingdom citizens travelling to or in the United States of America by the United States immigration authorities; what representations he has made to the United States Administration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am aware of a small number of cases where such difficulties have been experienced by British citizens. These have been brought to the attention of the United States Administration. United States immigration regulations are, of course, a matter for the United States authorities.

Ex-service Men's Compensation

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he is making with the German Government concerning compensation for British ex-service men interned during the second world war.

Mr. Garel-Jones: There is no basis on which to make representations with the German Government concerning compensation for British ex-service men interned during the second world war. Internment is a recognised right of a belligerent in times of war.

Nigeria

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Nigerian Government about the arrests of the human rights and pro-democracy activists Dr. Beko Ransome-Kuti, Barrister Femi Falana and Baba Omajola in Lagos on 19 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have told the Nigerian Government of our grave concern at the arrest and continued detention of these human rights activists. We have strongly urged them to abide by the due processes of law and either release or try the activists under normal and fair legal procedure. We expect to make further representations on this subject to the Nigerian authorities with our European Community partners.

Lao Ambassador

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the Lao ambassador to present his credentials; and what is the reason for the delay.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have not yet agreed a date with the Lao ambassador, who is resident in Paris, to present credentials. It is not uncommon for a period to elapse between agrément, the receipt of working copies of credentials, and their presentation by a non-resident ambassador.

COCOM

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the future of the co-ordinating committee of western nations on technology transfer (COCOM).

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 5 June, at column *673*.

Burma

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the Government have made to the Burmese State Law and Order Restoration Council, and at the United Nations, concerning the continued detention of Aung San Suu Kyi, and the continued killing and displacement of the Rohingya and Karen minorities.

Mr. Goodlad: With our Community partners, we have repeatedly called on the Burmese authorities to release Aung San Suu Kyi unconditionally from house arrest and to end all repression of minorities; including the Rohingyas and Karen. At the United Nations general assembly last November we co-sponsored a resolution urging respect for the democratic and human rights of the Burmese people. We also co-sponsored a resolution at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva earlier this year calling for an end to the repression of minorities, a public scrutiny of Burma's human rights record and the appointment of a special rapporteur. We fully support the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General in securing the repatriation of the Rohingya people to Burma.

Kuwait

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from Palestinians who were born in Kuwait and who are now in the United Kingdom who wish to return to Kuwait and are experiencing difficulties in so doing.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None.

EC Proposals

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the experts his Department consults on European Community proposals relating to issues of external affairs.

Mr. Garel-Jones: European Community proposals on external affairs cover a wide range of issues. My Department consults experts, including officials of other Governments and the European Commission, as appropriate.

Departmental Policies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) who is the Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications of all of the Overseas Development Administration's policies; when that person was appointed; what actions his Department has taken since the appointment of a responsible Minister; and if he will make a statement;

(2) who is the Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications of all of his Department's policies; when that person was appointed; what actions his Department has taken since the appointment of a responsible Minister; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government are again appointing a Minister within each Department to take particular responsibility for environmental aspects of that Department's policies and programmes. A list of nominated Ministers will be announced shortly.

"Action for the Environment"

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many copies of his Department's Overseas Development Administration's report, "Action for the Environment" have been printed; to whom copies have been made available; and what has been the cost to date of printing and circulation of this publication.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Overseas Development Administration has printed 20,000 copies of its information booklet "Action for the Environment". The publication was launched by the Minister for Overseas Development at the Earth summit in Rio de Janeiro where 2,000 copies were made available.

Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. "Action for the Environment" is being distributed to Government Departments and international and non-government organisations at home and overseas. Copies are also being sent to interested members of the public.

The cost to date of printing and circulating this publication is approximately £25,000.

EC Development Policy

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evaluation Her Majesty's Government have made of the European Commission's communication on scientific and technological co-operation with developing countries and its synergistic relations with development funds—SEC (92) 677.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Commission's aim is to increase the complementarity between expenditure from the research and development part of the EC budget on science and technology programmes of interest to developing countries and EC development co-operation policies. We have welcomed this approach in principle, but are seeking more information on how new management structures within the Commission would ensure that the high quality of current activities under the science and technology for development programme would be maintained.

Disarmament

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment has been made by Her Majesty's Government of the submission by China to the United Nations Disarmament Commission on the process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons—document A/CN.10./166, 24 April 1992; and what submissions were made by the United Kingdom to the United Nations Disarmament Commission session held from 20 April to 11 May.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have noted this statement of Chinese views.

The United Kingdom joined other European Community partners in submitting a working paper—document A/CN.10/172 of 5 May 1992—on this subject on behalf of the Twelve. We were also associated with a working paper—document A/CN.10/165—submitted on 23 April on behalf of the European Community and its member states on the role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields.

Refuseniks

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Vsevolod Shilon and his family of St. Petersburg.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We made representations to the Russian authorities in Moscow on behalf of Vsevolod and Vera Shilon on 18 May 1992.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Dimitri Pevzner and his family of St. Petersburg.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We made representations to the Russian authorities in Moscow on behalf of Dimitri and Luba Pevzner on 18 May 1992.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list by year, for the last 10 years, and for this year to date the number of people who have been *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused legal aid in civil cases.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In each of the financial years between 1980-81 and 1990-91, the number of civil legal aid certificates granted and applications refused were as follows:

	Certificates issued (thousands)	*Applications refused (thousands)*
1980-81	167·6	18·3
1981-82	176·1	21·5
1982-83	189·6	22·9
1983-84	205·9	24·8
1984-85	222·2	26·2
1985-86	232·4	28·4
1986-87	245·7	39·7
1987-88	245·4	48·6
1988-89	237·2	61·5
1989-90	259·2	81·2
1990-91	297·6	84·4

This information is contained in the legal aid annual reports which are available in the Library of the House. The report covering the period from April 1991 to March 1992 is due to be published on 22 June 1992.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what consideration has been given to the withdrawing of his Department's circular to magistrates issued on 1 April in respect of requiring applicants for legal aid to produce recent wage slips, or proof of benefit paid, before their application can be considered.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 8 June, *Official Report* columns 17-18, in which I announced that paragraph 10 of the circular, which deals with the production of wage slips, would be withdrawn. If there are particular difficulties arising out of the application of other parts of the regulations, I am prepared to consider them.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to issue further guidance to clarify paragraph 11 of his recent legal aid circular; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Following the withdrawal of paragraph 10 of the circular, consideration is being given to whether the criminal legal aid regulations need to be amended to ensure that they allow both for practicable procedures for administering legal aid and for proper accountability for public funds. This consideration will embrace the position of applicants on state benefits as well as those in employment. Further guidance will be issued in due course.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will withdraw the requirement in paragraph 11 of his recent legal aid circular to justices' clerks that proof of benefit level is necessary before legal aid can be granted.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Paragraph 11 of the circular reminds justices' clerks that applicants who are in receipt of certain benefits are required to provide details of the Benefit Agency office dealing with the benefit and the reference number and advises justices' clerks to seek corroborative evidence of receipt of the benefit claimed. It does not require proof of benefit level.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) what consideration he has given to the effect of the Data Protection Act 1984 on the effective implementation of paragraph 11 of his recent legal aid circular to justices' clerks;

(2) what are the arrangements for co-ordinating the effective implementation of paragraph 11 of the recent legal aid circular to justices' clerks by the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Benefits Agency.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My officials are exploring with the Benefits Agency arrangements for confirming the status of those criminal legal aid applicants who claim to be in receipt of benefits. The provisions of the Data Protection Act are being considered.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what estimate has been made of the cost to the legal aid fund of the implementation of paragraph 11 of the recent legal aid circular to justices' clerks.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The only purpose of the circular was to remind justices' clerks of the requirements of the existing regulations for the grant of criminal legal aid.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many people granted legal aid were in receipt of benefit, in the last year for which information is available.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not collected centrally. However, a recent sample of criminal legal aid applications indicated that, of the applications granted, just under 75 per cent. related to persons in receipt of income support or family credit.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether he will increase the limits of availability for legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Most of the financial limits for legal aid were uprated in April by about 7 per cent. and the Lord Chancellor does not intend to increase them further.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on the current level of legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold), on 22 May, at column *246*.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what assessment was made of the expected ability of persons detained in police custody to produce evidence of their wages for the preceding weeks, before the issue of his Department's circular concerning the conditions attaching to legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The only purpose of the circular was to remind justices' clerks of the requirements of the

existing regulations for the grant of criminal legal aid. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) on 8 June, *Official Report*, columns 17-18, in which I announced that paragraph 10 of the circular, which deals with the production of wage slips, would be withdrawn.

Queen's Counsel

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what information he has on the number of Queen's counsel who are *(a)* black, *(b)* Asian or *(c)* women.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The ethnic origin of applicants for the office of Queen's counsel was not recorded prior to the autumn of 1991, and the formal records in respect of ethnic origin are therefore incomplete.

It is, however, believed that there are at present four black Queen's counsel, of whom one is a woman, and three Asian Queen's counsel.

There are in total 41 female Queen's counsel currently in practice.

Justices of the Peace

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list by magistrates court, those courts that are currently below the required number of serving justices of the peace; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The question cannot be answered without disproportionate cost. The establishment figure for each Bench is a ceiling which is reviewed from time to time and not a day to day operational figure. There are at present 463 petty sessional divisions in England and Wales. If the hon. Member wishes me to give figures for particular Benches I shall be pleased to do so.

Family Conciliation Services

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on the funding of the family conciliation services; and what is his policy with respect to the retention of these services.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Funding of local family conciliation services in England and Wales is largely provided by the voluntary and private sectors, although in some areas assistance is provided by the probation service and local authorities. The Government have no current plans to fund local services.

The Lord Chancellor's Department is considering their role in England and Wales as part of the wider review of family law announced earlier this year.

PRIME MINISTER

"The World at One"

Mr. Biffen: To ask the Prime Minister whether the radio interview given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the BBC's "The World at One" programme on 10 June represents Government policy.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

UNCED

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

The Prime Minister: I have done so today.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 5 June, *Official Report*, column *656*, if he will set out the modes of transport used by the United Kingdom delegation to support its involvement in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development; and what is the total cost of each form of transport used.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom delegation used both car and minibus transport in Rio at an estimated cost of £25,000.

Commonwealth of Independent States

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what matters with regard to the nuclear proliferation risks posed by instability in the Commonwealth of Independent States were discussed; and what decisions taken, during his recent meeting with President Bush at Camp David.

The Prime Minister: We discussed a range of issues, many of which were related directly to developments in Europe, including the implications of the break-up of the former Soviet Union.

CSCE

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will announce the membership of the United Kingdom delegation to the forthcoming meeting of the assembly of the CSCE in Budapest.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 12 June 1992]:* The CSCE parliamentary assembly will be meeting in Budapest on 3 to 5 July. I have appointed 13 delegates from the Parliament of the United Kingdom. The delegation will consist of seven Members of the Conservative party, five Members of the Labour party and one Member of the Liberal party. I have also appointed a number of substitute delegates.

The appointment of Labour and Liberal representatives and substitutes have been made on the basis of nominations by the parties concerned.

Representatives from the Government Benches will be:

The right hon. Member for Westermoreland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), who will act as leader, the hon. Members for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall), for Honiton (Sir Peter Emery), for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) and for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), the Earl of Dundee and Lord Montgomery of Alamein.

Representatives from the Labour party will be the hon. Members for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), for Tooting (Mr. Cox), for Walsall, South (Mr. George), for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) and for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy).

The representative from the Liberal party will be the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell).

The following substitutes have been appointed to act as necessary on behalf of the delegates:

From the Government Benches, the hon. Members for Ashford (Sir. K. Speed), for Rochford (Dr. Clark) and for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin).

From the Labour party, the hon. Members for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) and for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross).

NATIONAL FINANCE

Travel Allowances

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the travelling and subsistence allowances payable on a daily basis to persons in public service and the standard motor mileage allowance for such persons for the year 1992-93; and how much of these allowances are chargeable to tax.

Mr. Portillo: The travelling and subsistence allowance payable on a daily basis to persons in the public service are as follows:

Standard rate of motor mileage allowances

From 1 April 1992	*Cars with engine capacity:* *Up to 1500 cc* p	*1501 cc-2000 cc* p	*Over 2000 cc* p
Up to 5,000 miles	35·7	40	43
Over 7,000 miles	17·0	21	27

Subsistence allowances

Day subsistence allowance (with effect from 1 August 1991)	*Subsistence classification All classes* £
More than 5 hours	3·90
More than 10 hours	8·60

Night subsistence allowance (with effect from 1 August 1991)	*Subsistence classification 1* £	*2* £	*3* £
Inner London	98·70	68·50	61·30
Elsewhere	85·85	63·15	48·85

Lodging allowance (paid after 30 nights) (with effect from 1 August 1991)	*Subsistence classification 1 and 2* £	*3* £
Married officer:		
Inner London	31·80	25·60
Elsewhere	29·90	23·80
Single officer:		
Inner London	22·80	22·80
Elsewhere	21·00	21·00

These rates are reviewed annually. From 1 August 1992 our intention is that Departments and agencies will determine their own motor mileage and subsistence rates. The excess between the motor mileage rates and the Inland Revenue fixed profit car scheme is taxable. The fixed profit car scheme rates for 1992-93 are:

From 1 April 1992	*Cars with engine capacity:* *1001 cc-1500 cc* p	*1501 cc-2000 cc* p	*Over 2000 cc* p
Up to 4,000 miles	30	42	51
Over 4,000 miles	17	21	27

Sustainable Growth

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will make it is policy to incorporate the notion of sustainability into all economic development plans incorporated by his Department;

(2) what plans he has to examine existing monetary and fiscal policies to assess their impact on sustainable resource management and environmental protection.

Sir John Cope: "This Common Inheritance—Cm 1200—sets out how the Government are integrating environmental considerations into all policy areas to promote sustainable growth.

Privatisation

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the Government's total income, to date, from privatisation since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: Privatisation proceeds from 1979-80 to 31 March 1992 were about £41¼ billion. Privatisation proceeds for 1992-93 are expected to be £8 billion.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his present forecast for the rise in gross domestic product for the first and second half of 1992.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor's forecast for economic growth was published in the 1992 "Financial Statement and Budget Report".

EC Proposals

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the experts his Department consults on European Community proposals relating to economic matters.

Sir John Cope: My Department consults a wide range of expert bodies and individuals as appropriate.

Earnings Statistics

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will show for 1992-93 those ranges of earnings within which the burden of income tax plus national insurance is less than in 1978-79.

Mr. Dorrell: In 1992-93, for taxpayers of working age whose incomes have increased in line with earnings, average rates of income tax and national insurance contributions are lower than in 1978-79 for everyone except some married men with earnings up to and including half of the average. On the same basis, real take-home pay is higher than in 1978-79 at all levels of earnings.

Departmental Policies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer who is the Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications of all of his Department's policies; when that person was appointed; what actions his Department has taken since the appointment of a responsible Minister; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: I have been responsible for considering the environmental implications of Treasury policies since 15 April.

Beer

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he proposes to introduce the new system for taxing beer on the alcoholic strength of the finished product.

Sir John Cope: The Government propose to introduce the new end product duty on beer with effect from 1 April 1993. From that date, duty will become payable when beer is dispatched for distribution and consumption from registered breweries or from bond.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Intestacy

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many individuals *(a)* in the Duchy of Lancaster and *(b)* in the constituency of Pendle die intestate in each year since 1982; and what was the total value of the estate claimed by the Crown in each year.

Mr. Waldegrave: The solicitor for the affairs of the Duchy of Lancaster is appointed to administer the estates of persons whose last permanent address was within the boundaries of the county palatine of Lancaster who die intestate and without surviving kin entitled to the estate under the rules of intestate succession. The boundaries of the county palatine are the same as the county boundaries which existed prior to local government reorganisation in 1973.

Intestate estates 1982 to 1991

	Number of cases	*Total amount claimed (£)*
1981-82	456	540,185·52
1982-83	463	747,058·28
1983-84	453	734,664·12
1984-85	455	748,154·93
1985-86	462	821,697·50
1986-87	462	921,513·00
1987-88	386	672,679·68
1988-89	391	754,241·67
1989-90	411	960,671·80
1990-91	398	799,872·54
		7,691,739·04

Unfortunately records do not show the number of cases arising in each year within any particular part of the county palatine.

There are a number of cases each year where kin who are entitled under the intestacy rules traced after administration is complete and in those cases the value of the estate plus interest is paid from Duchy funds to the relative concerned.

Duchy Income

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what were the main sources of income to the Duchy of Lancaster for each year since 1982.

Mr. Waldegrave: The main sources of income to the Duchy of Lancaster for the years ending 29 September 1982 to 29 September 1991 have been set out in the accounts of the Duchy, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House each year.

They may be summarised as follows:

Year and Item	*Amount £*
1982	
Revenue from estates	1,977,961
Dividends and interest	395,041
Devolutions	444,569
1983	
Revenue from estates	2,057,824
Dividends and interest	403,472
Devolutions	553,628
1984	
Revenue from estates	2,251,990
Dividends and interest	495,620
Devolutions	733,223
1985	
Revenue from estates	2,547,395
Dividends and interest	732,943
Devolutions	744,507
1986	
Revenue from estates	2,775,597
Dividends and interest	704,923
Devolutions	962,928
1987	
Revenue from estates	3,054,203
Dividends and interest	1,048,507
Devolutions	979,027
1988	
Revenue from estates	3,477,622
Dividends and interest	1,407,729
Devolutions	1,225,692
1989	
Revenue from estates	3,812,205
Dividends and interest	1,639,579
Devolutions	839,845
1990	
Revenue from estates	4,088,767
Dividends and interest	1,543,844
Devolutions	804,977
1991	
Revenue from estates	4,445,219
Dividends and interest	1,509,523
Devolutions	938,597

Duchy Land Holdings

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the locations of all the land holdings held by the Duchy; and if he will list separately those held in the county palatine.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is as follows:

ESTATES:

Crewe survey
- Halton
- Crewe
- Marbury
- ASH
- Castleton-High Peak
- Miscellaneous
- Newcastle

Needwood survey
- Needwood

Yorkshire survey
Pickering
Brompton
Marishes
Goathland
Cloughton and Scalby
Silpho
Pontefract
Tickhill
Knaresborough
South survey
Higham Ferrers
Olney
Strixton
Ogmore
Wainfleet-Bolingbroke
Desford
Lewes
York
Leicester
Cockfosters and Hadley Wood
London
Savoy
Harrogate
Clare
Dedham
County palatine Lancashire survey
Myerscough
Wyreside
Salwick
Winmarleigh
Whitewell
Miscellaneous
Foreshores
Lancaster

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all those functions and areas in his Department and associated agencies that have been identified for market testing in the wake of the White Paper "Competing for Quality".

Mr. Robert Jackson: I am still considering the proposals put forward by my Department and other Government Departments and an announcement will be made shortly.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment his Department has made of the Commission report, "Research after Maastricht: an Assessment and Strategy", SEC (92) 682F.

Mr. Waldegrave: The report was discussed at the 29 April Research Council in Luxembourg. I made clear our concern that the future development of EC research policy should be based on a rigorous evaluation of research to date, and that the emphasis should be on pre-competitive research, identifying generic technologies with a wide range of applications, rather than supporting specific industrial sectors. These points were broadly supported by other member states. We look forward to developing these themes with the Commission and our partners during our presidency.

EDUCATION

Student Loans

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students from the county of Durham are in receipt of student loans at the present and for the last two years.

Mr. Forman: This information is not available. The Student Loans Company does not collect data relating to borrowers' place of domicile.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the financial implications of the following comprehensive schools in the Colne Valley constituency taking on grant-maintained status *(a)* Colne Valley high school, *(b)* Holmfirth high school, *(c)* Hanley high school and *(d)* Salendine Nook high school; and how the funding outlined compares with what the schools currently receive from the local education authority.

Mr. Forth: The main recurrent grant for GM schools is annual maintenance grant—AGM. This is set for GM schools in most LEAs at 15 per cent. above their local management of schools entitlement. This standard cash addition helps meet the cost of services previously provided free by the LEA. There is also a smaller addition related to school meal subsidy levels in that LEA.

GM schools are also eligible to receive other grants as follows:

(i) Transitional grants to help meet the transitional costs of schools newly approved for GM status—in 1992-93 secondary schools can receive £30,000 plus £30 per pupil, to maximum of £60,000.

(ii) Special purpose grants to help with a variety of activities. For example the SPG for "development" helps fund in-service training and implementation of the national curriculum and assessment, for which LEAs are funded via the GEST programme. This SPG is paid at a flat rate of £42·50 per pupil. Other SPGs are available to help with VAT, staff restructuring and premises insurance.

(iii) There are two types of *capital grant* available to GM schools: a formula allocation for the purchase of equipment or small scale capital works; and project allocations for specific capital work. GM schools bid for project allocations and bids are considered in competition.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what amount of capital grant per pupil he has provided to grant-maintained schools in each local education authority for 1992-93 based on the pupil numbers as at 1 April.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 12 June 1992]:* The table lists the capital allocations to GM schools for 1992-93, expressed as an average per pupil figure, based on January 1991 numbers, for GM schools in each LEA area. The relevant number of pupils will rise as schools join the GM sector during the year.

The figures need to be treated with caution. Because of current coverage of GM schools, figures will vary widely depending on the number of GM schools in a LEA area and whether or not a school was successful in the bidding round for capital projects in 1992-93. Bids are looked at in competition with others received from schools across the whole of the country.

Average capital allocations per pupil by former LEA area for GM schools for projects starting in 1992-93

	£
Avon	185·68
Barnet	56·96
Bedfordshire	178·31
Berkshire	257·37
Birmingham	281·96
Bolton	34·56
Bradford	296·60
Brent	224·51
Bromley	148·05
Buckinghamshire	284·41
Calderdale	204·55
Cambridgeshire	52·63
Cheshire	63·10
Croydon	147·04
Cumbria	71·54
Derbyshire	493·34
Devon	41·65
Dorset	192·40
Dudley	38·38
Ealing	30·64
Essex	71·89
Gloucestershire	689·11
Hammersmith	28·49
Hampshire	57·56
Hertfordshire	229·89
Hillingdon	215·98
Humberside	122·04
Kensington	35·90
Kent	126·44
Kirklees	229·92
Lambeth	1,299·46
Lancashire	304·53
Leicestershire	337·00
Lincolnshire	149·26
Liverpool	29·86
Newham	45·45
Norfolk	71·03
Northamptonshire	320·20
Rochdale	62·37
Sandwell	131·82
Shropshire	1,070·33
Somerset	46·25
Southwark	429·21
Surrey	136·41
Sutton	210·31
Thameside	33·19
Tow[illegible]rts	31·48
Waltham Forest	58·88
Wandsworth	286·32
Warwickshire	86·56
Wiltshire	39·84
Wolverhampton	727·55

Notes:

1. The total includes formula capital allocations to schools for 1992-93 and provision for spending in 1992-93 and 1993-94 on named projects started in 1992-93.
2. The total does not include spending in 1992-93 on named projects begun in previous years.

Student Funding

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received about the future of student funding.

Mr. Forman: My right hon. Friend has received various representations on this matter. Public funding for higher education is at record levels. For the third year running, public expenditure plans provide for a year-on-year increase of about 10 per cent. Full-year student support from grant and loan is now over 30 per cent. higher than the grant alone two years ago. Our reforms have led to a dramatic expansion of higher education. Ten years ago, only one in eight young people entered higher education. it is now nearly one in four. We expect it to be one in three by the year 2000.

Ealing Schools

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, column *88*, if he will aim to give his decision on the reorganisation proposals for Ealing's county and voluntary schools before mid-July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Statutory proposals from the five grant-maintained schools in Ealing were published between 8 and 15 May. My right hon. Friend intends to determine these proposals as soon as possible after the two-month statutory objection period ends on 15 July. He will then be in a position to reach decisions on the outstanding proposals in respect of the county and voluntary schools.

Interleukin-6

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions his Department has held with the university of Leeds in relation to the scientific work on Interleukin-6; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: My Department has held no such discussions. It is for individual universities and research funding bodies to pursue particular areas of scientific research in line with their own priorities.

EC Proposals

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the experts his Department consults on European Community proposals relating to educational matters.

Mr. Forman: The Department has taken account of a variety of expert views in its consideration of new EC proposals and the implementation in this country of EC programmes. At present, the Department is supporting a major consultation exercise on the EC Commission's memorandum on higher education in the EC.

Departmental Policies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education who is the Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications of all of his Department's policies; when that person was appointed; what actions his Department has taken since the appointment of a responsible Minister; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment today. He will be publishing a list of nominated Ministers shortly.

Schools (Organisation)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish the proposed White Paper on organisation of schools before the summer recess; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: As announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, we will publish a White Paper by the end of the summer. This will be followed by an education Bill in the autumn.

Student Unions

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is *(a)* the total amount for the United Kingdom and *(b)* the average amount per student of local education authority payments on behalf of students to further and higher education institutions to pay the students' membership fees of student unions.

Mr. Forman: In general, campus unions are not funded by membership fees but by block grant from their parent institutions. In higher education institutions, block grant is paid out of general funds including funding council grant and fees. In further education, the block grant is usually derived from an element within the student registration fee.

School Playing Fields

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will revise the criteria for school playing fields so as to provide larger areas of playing fields.

Mr. Forth: The current review of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981 is considering school playing field provision as part of its programme of work.

The results of the review are expected to be available later this year.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Fraud

33. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Attorney-General what new proposals he has to reduce the levels of crimes of fraud.

The Solicitor-General: The Serious Fraud Office and the fraud investigation group of the Crown prosecution service are designed to deter the incidence of serious fraud by providing for effective investigation and prosecution.

34. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the number of *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* inquiries launched by the Serious Fraud Office in 1992 to date.

The Attorney-General: In 1992, 16 prosecutions have been completed by the Serious Fraud Office. Of the 23 investigations currently in hand, 16 have been commenced in 1992. These are either new inquiries or are extensions of pre-existing investigations.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's arrangements for consulting the Data Protection Registrar during the planning stage of any initiative involving the collection, use or disclosure of personal data; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The legal secretariat to the Law Officers, the Treasury Solicitor's Department, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Serious Fraud Office are aware that systems involving the collection, use or disclosure of automatically processed personal data must comply with the Data Protection Act 1984. Each Department is registered in accordance with the Act and each Department consults the Data Protection Registrar as necessary at the planning stage of any such systems.

Criminal Justice

Mrs. Prentice: To ask the Attorney-General what suggestions for reform he has made to the Royal Commission on the Criminal Justice System.

The Attorney-General: My predecessor submitted written evidence to the Royal Commission on criminal justice dealing with the law and practice relating to the disclosure by the prosecution of material to the defence. Extensive written evidence has also been submitted by the Director of Public Prosecutions and by the director of the Serious Fraud Office. Copies of the evidence of the Attorney-General and the Director of Public Prosecutions are available in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

Departmental Environmental Policies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Attorney-General who is the Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications of all of his Department's policies; when that person was appointed; what actions his Department has taken since the appointment of a responsible Minister; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Government are again appointing a Minister within each Department to take particular responsibility for environmental aspects of that Department's policies and programmes. A list of nominated Ministers will be announced shortly.

The work of the legal secretariat to the Law Officers, the Treasury Solicitor's Department, the Crown Prosecution Service and Serious Fraud Office does not have direct environmental implications, but each of the Departments has taken steps in its purchasing, energy use, and waste management policies to promote good practice in relation to the environment. Each of the Departments uses recycled paper products wherever practicable. Low-energy light bulbs are in use at the Serious Fraud Office and are being fitted in the Treasury Solicitor's Department and legal secretariat to the Law Officers. In the Crown Prosecution Service a computerised estate management information system is being developed to include data on energy consumption and costs for all CPS buildings. In relation to energy use, each of the Departments is committed to taking part in the Government's campaign to achieve savings of 15 per cent. in the total energy bill for the Government estate over a five-year period.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Targeting

39. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of the Overseas Development Agency budget is targeted towards the poorest countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We spend about 75 to 80 per cent. of our bilateral aid on the poorest countries.

Southern Africa (Drought)

40. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the effects of the drought in southern Africa and on United Kingdom assistance to those countries suffering the most.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: With food production in the region at less than half the normal level this year and with up to 18 million people at serious risk, the drought remains a matter of grave concern. In response to the crisis, the Government have pledged from the bilateral programme food aid, balance of payments support and other assistance totalling £34 million so far this year, in addition to our share of the special food aid programme of the European Community worth £27·5 million.

Kenya

41. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy for assisting Kenya with a view to enabling refugee children from the Sudan to be cared for locally whilst the current situation persists.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As I told the House on 9 June, we have contributed £1 million to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees appeal for assistance to refugees in Kenya, which includes the needs of the Sudanese children.

Population Policies

42. **Mr. Ottaway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what priority he intends to give to population policies during the United Kingdom presidency of the EC Development Council.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A high priority. We aim to have a resolution agreed by the Development Council encouraging the Community to provide more support to population programmes in developing countries.

Know-how Funds

43. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new initiatives are planned to be introduced to expand the application of know-how funds in eastern Europe.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The know-how fund is going well and is much appreciated in central and eastern Europe. At present we have no plans to expand its scope: the country coverage is kept under careful review.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

11. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much his Department estimates that the proposed national lottery, once in operation, could raise for good causes.

Mr. Key: It is too soon to say. However, we intend the lottery to be a full-blooded success, raising hundreds of millions of pounds for good causes. The distribution of the proceeds between beneficiaries, prizes, tax and operating costs has not yet been established.

Football (Televising)

12. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on his policy for the televising of football.

Mr. Mellor: Viewers and listeners should have the best possible range of choice.

Arts, Grimsby

13. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he has to encourage the arts in Grimsby.

Mr. Key: Detailed funding decisions are for the Yorkshire and Humberside regional arts board. It supports the south bank jazz festival and a variety of other arts projects in Grimsby.

Museums and Galleries (Admission Charges)

14. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he plans to meet the directors of the national museums and galleries to discuss admission charges.

Mr. Key: My regular meetings with directors confirm that our present policy of allowing directors and trustees to make their own decisions on admission charges is working well.

Industrial Heritage

16. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what new initiatives he proposes to introduce to secure the preservation of sites of industrial heritage.

Mr. Key: I visited Burnley in my former capacity as a Minister in the Department of the Environment and was impressed by the work being done there to preserve its unique industrial heritage.

Preservation of the industrial heritage is best secured by bringing it fully within our established system for preserving heritage sites. We are supporting work on the extension of the National Archaeology Record up to 1945; we are funding the Association for Industrial Archaeology's project to help build a better database; and we have agreed with English Heritage that industrial monuments should be given greater priority in its grant programmes.

Arts and Media

17. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he last met the chairman of the Arts Council to discuss the national arts and media strategy document.

28. **Ms. Corston:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he last met the chairman of the Arts Council to discuss the national arts and media strategy documents.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall).

Tourism

18. **Mr. Nicholls:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will assess for the most recent year available the contribution made to the United Kingdom economy by the tourism industry.

Mr. Key: Tourism is an important contributor to the United Kingdom economy, and it is estimated that domestic and overseas tourists together spent £25 billion in 1991, equivalent to 4 per cent. of the gross domestic product. There were also about 1·5 million employees in employment in tourism-related industries in June 1991 and 183,000 self-employed in these industries in spring 1991.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will set out his policies on tourism.

Mr. Key: Tourism is a successful industry whose enterprise creates wealth and jobs throughout the United Kingdom. It is our heritage, sport and culture which help to make this country so attractive to visitors, and we intend to make the most of the links between the different responsibilities of the Department to ensure that the industry continues to prosper. In common with our other responsibilities, policies on tourism will be reviewed to ensure that taxpayers money is being spent in the most appropriate and cost-effective way.

Woolwich Arsenal

19. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the importance for the national heritage of the buildings on the royal arsenal site at Woolwich.

Mr. Key: Eighteen buildings on the royal arsenal site at Woolwich have been assessed as being of special architectural or historical interest and placed on the statutory list.

Arts (Funding)

20. **Mr. Wolfson:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much funding the private sector has provided for the arts for each pound of Government funding.

Mr. Key: In 1991-92 almost £6·3 million was directly generated by a Government investment of over £3 million in the business sponsorship incentive scheme. Figures for annual private sector sponsorship for that period are not yet available; however annual business sponsorship of the arts, including corporate membership, for 1990-91 amounted to some £57·2 million compared with only £500,000 in 1976.

Works of Art (Indemnity Scheme)

21. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will introduce a national indemnity scheme for works of art on loan to and from galleries and museums.

Mr. Key: A national indemnity scheme has been in operation since 1980, established under the National Heritage Act 1980. The Government indemnity scheme, as it is called, relieves both national and non-national museums and galleries of the need to take out commercial insurance to cover items on loan for the public benefit.

BBC Funding

23. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the Government's policy towards the funding of the BBC.

Mr. Mellor: Our policy is that the television licence fee should remain for the time being the principal means of financing the BBC. The longer-term future of the licence fee will be considered as part of the review of the BBC"s charter which is due to expire in 1996.

BBC Licence Fee

24. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to discuss the licence fee with the chairman of the BBC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I have regular discussions with the chairman of the BBC. Licence fee increases are based on the annual increase in the retail prices index as at the preceding September, in the same way as rises in pensions and other state benefits. I intend to reassess the position in advance of the fee increase due in 1994. The longer-term future of the fee will be considered as part of the review of the BBC's royal charter which expires in 1996.

European Arts Festival

26. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will outline plans for the European festival of arts taking place during the British presidency of the EC.

Mr. Mellor: The European arts festival will run for the duration of the presidency across the four countries of the United Kingdom. It will celebrate the rich European culture heritage through a wide range of more than 600 events covering all the art forms, traditional and new.

It is by design a festival with broad popular appeal. It contains something for everyone, whatever their age and tastes. It has a special emphasis on young people. All 35,000 maintained schools and the main national youth organisations have been invited to take part. It will also bring to the United Kingdom some of Europe's finest companies.

The programme for the festival is currently being printed. I shall ensure that all Members of the House receive a personal copy.

Urban Regeneration Agency

27. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will be meeting the new head of the urban regeneration agency to discuss the development of vacant derelict public land for recreation purposes.

Mr. Key: My right hon. and learned Friend and I will be very ready to meet Mr. Walker, once the urban regeneration agency is established, to discuss issues of common concern.

BBC Staff Cuts

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the proposed cuts in staff at the BBC.

Mr. Mellor: It is for the BBC, as a public corporation independent of the Government, to decide how many staff

it needs to meet its obligations, but we support the initiatives the BBC has launched to increase efficiency and ensure better value for money.

Foundation for Sports and the Arts

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage to whom the Foundation for Sports and the Arts is accountable; how it decides on the allocation of its grants; what sums have been allocated; and if he will make a statement on the operation of the FSA.

Mr. Key: The Foundation for Sport and the Arts is an independent body and its grants are made at the absolute discretion of the trustees within the terms of the foundation's trust deed. Before taking decisions, the trustees may seek advice, in the case of sport from the Sports Council and the governing bodies of sports. My Department holds observer status at the meeting of the trust and its working parties.

Up to 5 April 1992, the FSA had allocated grants totalling £37·5 million.

Works of Art (Exports)

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he has to list works of art to prevent their export.

Mr. Key: I refer to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) on 5 June 1992, *Official Report*, columns *646-47*.

Departmental Environment Policies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who is the Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications of all of his Department's policies; when that person was appointed; what actions his Department has taken since the appointment of a responsible Minister; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The Government are again appointing a Minister within each Department to take particular responsibility for environmental aspects of that Department's policies and programmes. A list of nominated Ministers will be announced shortly.

Press Complaints Commission

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the Press Complaints Commission's monitoring of articles referring to members of the royal family and their personal lives.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* The means by which the Press Complaints Commission monitors press articles and secure compliance with the code of practice framed by the newspaper and periodical industry are matters for the commission, not the Government. The statement issued by the commission on 8 June has attracted much interest. We will be taking the commission's views into account in the forthcoming review of press self-regulation.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Fireworks

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has for limitations on the maximum noise emitted by imported fireworks, with particular reference to bangers imported from the People's Republic of China; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: To comply with the general safety requirement of the Consumer Protection Act 1987, all imported fireworks are required to conform to the British standard for fireworks. This limits the explosive content of bangers which in effect limits the noise of the explosion. The United Kingdom is currently taking part in discussions to develop a European standard on fireworks, which will include restrictions on the maximum noise emitted.

Private Telephone Networks

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many companies have *(a)* applied for and *(b)* been granted a licence from his Department for residential and business customer access to their private telephone network in the last 12 months.

Mr. Leigh: Of the 37 applications received by 11 June 1992, my Department issued eight new telecommunications licences to companies who wish to take advantage of the liberalisations announced in the duopoly review last year.

The Government liberalised the use of private networks in 1989 under a "class" licence. Several companies have taken advantage of this to provide a range of services to the public. Some companies have now applied for individual licences to provide services which are beyond the scope of the existing class licence, but which are permissible under individual licences since the duopoly review. These applications are under consideration.

Power Stations

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy concerning the burning of orimulsion in power stations.

Mr. Eggar: The type and quantity of fuel used by the electricity generators is an operational matter for the companies concerned, subject to emission limits imposed by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what in his estimate of the number of power stations in Wales that are fired by, or are planned to be fired by, gas; if he will give their locations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Consent under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 has been granted to two gas-fired power stations in Wales, namely to the Deeside Power Development Company Ltd to construct and operate a 450 MW combined cycle gas turbine—CCGT—station at Deeside, Clwyd and to Texaco Ltd to construct and operate an 1100 or 1280 MW CCGT station at Angle bay, Dyfed. I understand that the Shotton Paper Company Ltd has

obtained the necessary permission under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to construct a 200 MW station at Shotton, Clwyd.

My right hon. Friend is currently considering an application from PowerGen plc to construct a 1350 MW CCGT station at Connah's Quay, Clwyd. He is also considering an application from the Deeside Power Development Company Ltd to increase the output of the proposed Deeside station to 500 MW.

Cars

Mr. Milligan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what progress is being made in reducing British pre-tax car prices to the levels that prevail in the European Community;

(2) if he will make a statement on the progress being made in promoting a parallel trade in importing cars from the European Community.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: On 6 May my right hon. Friend announced that he had asked the Director General of Fair Trading: to begin discussions with car suppliers with a view to implementing the recommendations in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's February report on the supply of new cars; and for advice on whether any further action should be taken. The MMC recommendations will contribute to increasing competition with potential benefits in the prices paid by consumers. My right hon. Friend also welcomed Sir Leon Brittan's statement on the EC study of car prices, in which Sir Leon drew attention to EC rules facilitating parallel imports within the single market. Sir Leon has called on manufacturers to ensure that cars are made available to fulfil demand for such imports.

Music Industry

Mr. Lester: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the contribution made by the British popular music industry to United Kingdom export earnings last year.

Mr. Needham: The value of United Kingdom exports of recorded music in 1991 was £216·2 million, representing 0·2 per cent. of visible exports. Trade in recorded popular music cannot be separately identified from other forms of music.

Nuclear Issues

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade for what civil nuclear matters for which he has responsibility it is his policy not to release information to Parliament on grounds *(a)* of national security *(b)* that it is not in the national interest *(c)* of commercial confidentiality or *(d)* other criteria; and if he will review the criteria currently adopted for non-disclosure of information on nuclear issues.

Mr. Eggar: Decisions on whether information on civil nuclear matters can be released to Parliament are taken on the merits of the case. It is, therefore, not possible to define in general terms matters on which it would be inappropriate to release information.

Insurance Claims

Mr. David Martin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will meet the Association of British Insurers to discuss strengthening the guidelines on meeting insurance claims to avoid undue delay in settlement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No. I have no evidence that the guidelines need strengthening.

Departmental Accommodation

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much he is spending on the rental of accommodation in London for his Department; and what is the highest rental charge he is paying per square foot for accommodation.

Mr. Eggar: My Department occupies property in London which is allocated to it by the Department of Environmental Property Holdings which is responsible for paying rentals to landlords. Rental charges are the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the cost of the refurbishment of his Department's accommodation in London.

Mr. Eggar: I do not have firm plans to pay for refurbishing accommodation in London.

Departmental Environment Policies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who is the Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications of all of his Department's policies; when that person was appointed; what actions his Department has taken since the appointment of a responsible Minister; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to a similar question given today by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Culham (Industrial Relations)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on industrial relations at Culham in relation to the threat of strike action over pay.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 12 June 1992]:* The pay and conditions of UK Atomic Energy Authority staff working on the joint European Torus project are matters for resolution between the authority's management and its staff.

Guardian Royal Exchange

Mr. Skinner: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what inquiries his Department has been making into the share schemes at Guardian Royal Exchange.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 12 June 1992]:* I am unable to comment on the affairs of any individual company. However, if any one has any concerns about this matter he or she may like to pass them on to one of my officials.

Mirror Group Newspapers

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the companies being covered by the investigation into the flotation of Mirror Group Newspapers.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 12 June 1992]:* The inspectors have been appointed to investigate the affairs and membership of Mirror Group Newspapers plc.

The powers contained in section 433 of the Companies Act 1985 are available if necessary.

Regional Policy

Mr. McCartney: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he next intends to meet representatives of the European Commission to discuss regional policy; and if he will ensure that this meeting is held at a venue in the north west of England.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 10 June 1992]:* At present my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has no immediate plans to meet Commissioner Millan but I expect to do so in the course of the meetings between the UK presidency and the Commission on 1 July in London.

Generating Plants

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many planning applications are outstanding for gas fired power stations; and if he will give their locations.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Edmonton on 8 June *Official Report*, column 31.

My right hon. Friend is also considering an application from Kelt UK Ltd to construct and operate an open cycle gas turbine power station in Ryedale.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Greyhound Racing

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the payments made by off-course bookmakers to greyhound racing since 1 April following the reduction in general betting duty.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave him on 11 June, at column *234*.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the funds resulting from the quarter per cent. reduction in general betting duty has been set aside as part of the 31st betting levy scheme; whether the sum made available to greyhound racing will be proportionate to the amount of off-course betting duty attributable to greyhound racing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The determination of the 31st levy scheme took into account the reduction in general betting duty on horserace bets, estimated to represent about 72 per cent of total off-course betting turnover in 1990-91. The size of any voluntary payments by bookmakers to greyhound racing following the reduction in general betting duty is a matter for negotiation between the two parties. We understand that those negotiations are under way and have asked to be informed of the outcome.

Asylum Seekers

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the asylum decisions made between December 1991 and April 1992 related to applications made before 1 November 1991; and how many of these applications were given refugee status, exceptional leave to remain, third country refusals and paragraph 101 refusals.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on decisions taken between December 1991 and April 1992 is given in the table. Information on the date of application is not yet available, but it is likely that, during this period, the great majority of substantive grants and refusals of asylum and exceptional leave related to applications made before 1 November 1991. The exception would be in those cases where priority was given because the applicant was detained or had arrived from a safe third country.

Decisions made under paragraph 101 of the Immigration Rules will include both applications made before and after 1 November 1991.

Decisions on asylum applications, excluding dependants, December 1991 to April 1992

	Number
Granted asylum	252
Granted exceptional leave	2,284
Refused asylum and exceptional leave	853
Refused on safe third country grounds	274
Refused under paragraph 101 of the immigration rules[1]	5,662

[1] For failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period.

Mental Health Act 1983

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were removed from the United Kingdom in 1990 and 1991 under section 86 of the Mental Health Act 1983; and to which countries they were removed.

Mr. Jack: In 1990 four people were removed under this provision to Nigeria, two cases, Hong Kong and Saudia Arabia.

In 1991 five people were removed under this provision to Germany, two cases, Ghana, Hungary and the United States of America.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when a request was received from the British High Commission in Zambia for inquiries to be made following an application to enter the United Kingdom as a priest from Mr. Ismail Ebrahim Bhulla (Ref. GV100/13333); when the reply was sent to Zambia; what recommendation has been made on this application; when a decision is to be considered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The high commission referred the application on 20 February and the request was received in the Home Office on 3 March. I am sorry that there was a

delay in dealing with the case. I shall resolve the application as quickly as possible and I will write to the hon. Member when we have done so.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the current list of outstanding cases in each of the divisions at the immigration and nationality department in Croydon and Liverpool.

Mr. Charles Wardle: At the beginning of June the number of outstanding applications in the caseworking divisions was as follows:

	Number
General immigration casework	22,595
Asylum and related casework	61,891
Nationality	52,811

Crime Statistics

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of crimes committed in the Blyth Valley area in 1989 to 1991.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not collected centrally for the Blyth Valley area.

Strip Searches

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of strip searches made on women inmates in prisons in England and Wales in each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Prison establishments are not required to maintain records of all strip searches made on women prisoners. However, they do maintain records of strip searches of female inmates in category A. There were 103 such searches in 1989, 136 in 1990 and 189 in 1991.

Arson

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of the Arson Prevention Bureau; and what success has been achieved in the improved protection of premises, especially school buildings, countering fraudulent arson and improvements in the methods of fire investigations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Arson Prevention Bureau, which is jointly funded by the Home Office and the Association of British Insurers, was officially launched in February 1991. The bureau provides the first concerted approach to combating the crime of arson. A research project has been completed on the protection of property against arson and further projects on arson for insurance fraud purposes, and arson in schools are under way. It is hoped as a result of the latter project to be able to recommend a package of measures which will lead to a reduction in the heavy incidence of school arson.

The Arson Prevention Bureau has recently published its first annual review, and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Police Cells

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women being held in police cells at police stations in England and Wales on 8 June.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On Monday 8 June there were 1,242 men and 18 women being held in police cells in England and Wales who should otherwise have been in prison.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of police stations in Northumbria that are holding prisoners on remand; and how many are being held at each station.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table shows police stations in Northumbria where prisoners who should otherwise have been in prison were being held on Wednesday 10 June.

Police station	*Number of prisoners*
Alnwick	2
Byker	7
Whitley Bay	4
Forest Hall	1
Cramlington	5
Gateshead	8
Jarrow	3
Sunderland	12
Total	42

Caravans (Theft)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many thefts *(a)* of caravans and *(b)* from caravans were reported to the police in each year from 1974 to date in (i) England and (ii) north Yorkshire.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Murder

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to set up a royal commission on the issue of provocation as it applies to women using it as a defence against murder charges.

Mr. Jack: There are no such plans, but this branch of the criminal law is kept under careful review.

EC Proposals

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the experts his Department consults on European Community proposals relating to security and immigration matters.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Co-operation among the Twelve on these matters generally takes place outside the framework of the treaty of Rome. In considering proposals, the Home Office consults closely with other interested Departments and with the police service as well as relying on its own expertise.

North Wales Police

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to make his decision concerning the application by the North Wales police for 58 police posts for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The North Wales application, together with applications from 40 other police

authorities, is being considered in the light of advice from Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary. The announcement of approved increases for individual forces is usually made in the autumn.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to visit the headquarters of the North Wales police.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so at present.

Departmental Environment Policies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who is the Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications of all of his Department's policies; when that person was appointed; what actions his Department has taken since the appointment of a responsible Minister; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government are appointing a Minister within each Department to take particular responsibility for environmental aspects of the Department's policies and programmes. A list of nominated Ministers will be announced shortly.

Blakenhurst Prison

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Government are yet in a position to make a statement about the standard of service which will be expected of a private sector company contracted to run Blakenhurst prison.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Work has now been completed on the specification for the operation of Blakenhurst prison under private sector management and for the selection and training requirements for prisoner custody officers. This forms part of the invitation to tender issued to the potential contractors and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House. A draft order to extend contracting-out to prisons holding sentenced prisoners has been laid and the House will shortly have an opportunity to debate the matter. Subject to parliamentary approval, and the receipt of satisfactory tenders which offer value for money, we would aim to award a contract in the autumn with a view to Blakenhurst becoming operational next spring.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Cardiac Surgery

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will indicate the number of patients each health and social services board in Northern Ireland intends to send to *(a)* Great Britain and *(b)* elsewhere for cardiac surgery during the current year; what is the average cost per patient from each board area; and what is the average cost per patient in the present year for such surgery in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: The number of patients for whom boards have already negotiated contracts for treatment in Great Britain for cardiac surgery in 1992-93 is as follows:

Board	*Number*
Northern	30
Southern	26
Eastern	20
Western	30

Further patients may be sent to Great Britain later in the year, but details are not yet available. They are not likely to send any patients outside the United Kingdom for cardiac surgery this year.

It is not possible to provide a meaningful average cost for each patient since the cost is influenced by a number of factors which vary from patient to patient. These factors include the severity and type of cardiac disease, the amount of clinical re-assessment which may be necessary before the operation, and the volume of patients for whom a particular contract is being negotiated. On this basis, average costs vary from £3,500 to £5,000 per patient.

Cardiac surgery performed in Northern Ireland, is only carried out at the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast and the average costs per patient this year are likely to be around £6,800.

Lignite Reserves

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the private sector will be given the opportunity to develop Ballymoney lignite reserves.

Mr. Atkins: A prospecting licence for the Ballymoney lignite field is held by Meekatharra (NI) Ltd. Any development of the field would require a mining licence and planning permission. No application for either has been received.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assurances have been given to the owners of power stations in Northern Ireland with regard to the future utilisation of lignite reserves at Ballymoney for generating electricity.

Mr. Atkins: None.

Council Tenants

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he intends to introduce into Northern Ireland the cash incentive scheme to provide grants for council tenants to buy homes.

Mr. Atkins: I have no plans to do so.

Caravans

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will give urgent consideration to introducing legislation which will give *(a)* greater tenancy security for caravan owners or leaseholders on licensed caravan sites and *(b)* greater protection against financial exploitation arising from rental increases by site owners or managers.

Mr. Atkins: I have no plans to do so.

Road Schemes

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show the major capital road schemes programmed in the year 1988

for the years *(a)* 1988-89, *(b)* 1989-90, *(c)* 1990-91, *(d)* 1991-92 and *(e)* 1992-93; how many of those schemes were dropped in each subsequent year; and which ones have been (i) started and (ii) completed up to the latest available date.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is as follows:

Financial year and proposed scheme	*Started*	
	Completed	*Start date*
1988-89		
A26 Antrim/Ballymena dualling: stage 1	Completed	—
A57/B101 Oldstone road	Completed	—
Eastlink Dundonald	Completed	—
Longwood road, Newtonabbey	Completed	—
Castlecourt, Belfast	Completed	—
Buncrana road, Londonderry	Dropped	—
Banbridge bypass dualling	Completed	—
Newry 8A (Canal street/Downshire road link)	Completed	—
Balloo road, Bangor: stage 2	Completed	—
Omagh through-pass: stage 1	Completed	—
1989-90		
Federick street, Belfast	Completed	—
Greenmount link, roundabout, Coleraine	Completed	—
Crossnadonnell, Limavady	Completed	—
Strand road, Londonderry	Completed	—
Culmore road, Londonderry	Completed	—
Bridge street/Tavanagh avenue, Portadown	Completed	—
Dunmurry bypass: stage 2C	Completed	—
A48 Donaghdee road, Vewtownards	Completed	—
T4 Hillsborough bypass junction	Completed	—
Strabane bypass: stage 1	—	1989-90
Church street/Scotch street, Downpatrick	—	1993-94
1990-91		
Castledawson bypass	Completed	—
Belfast schemes arising from Belfast urban area plan	—	1994-95
Greenmount link, Coleraine: stages 3 and 4	—	1995-96
Bushmills road, Coleraine	Completed	—
T4 Mullan's Corner dualling	Completed	—
Dunmurry bypass: stage 2D	Completed	—
Enniskillen through-pass: stage 3B	Completed	—
High street/Hamilton road, Bangor	—	1991-92
1991-92		
Killead Bypass	—	1995-96
A26 Antrim/Ballymena dualling: stage 2	—	1995-96
Belfast schemes arising from Belfast urban plan	—	1994-95
Strand road, Londonderry: stage 2	—	1995-96
Newry bypass: stage 2	—	1993-94
North road/Talbot street, Newtownards	Dropped	—
Comber bypass: stage 2	—	1995-96
1992-93		
Northern distributor Ballymena	—	1995-96
Belfast schemes arising from Belfast urban area plan	—	1994-95
Queens Quay, Londonderry	—	1991-92
Newry bypass: stage 3	—	1993-94
Pond park, Lisburn	—	[1]—
Omagh through-pass: stage 2	—	1994-95
A29 Carland Bridge	—	1996-97

[1]Not in current 5-year programme.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to include financial incentives for investment in energy efficiency in the proposed electricity privatisation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: The transmission and public electricity supply licence published on 31 March 1992, contains a number of financial incentives to encourage NIE plc to promote energy efficiency. The most significant of these is the imposition of a total revenue cap on NIE plc's transmission and distribution business. Copies of the licence are available in the Library.

Schools

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many pupils are at each of *(a)* the primary and *(b)* the secondary schools in the constituency of Strangford in (i) the maintained, (ii) the controlled and (iii) the integrated sectors of education.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

	Numbers
PRIMARY SCHOOLS	
Maintained	
St. Anne's Donaghadee	36
St. Finian's Newtownards	218
St. Mary's Ballygowan	61
St. Mary's Comber	33
St. Mary's Kircubbin	217
St. Mary's Portaferry	334
St. Patrick's Portaferry	76
Controlled	
Abbey, Newtownards	395
Alexander Dickson, Newtownards	181
Andrews Memorial, Comber	500
Ballykeigle, Comber	62
Ballyvester, Donaghadee	82
Ballywalter, Newtownards	138
Belvoir, Belfast	319
Braniel, Belfast	353
Cairnshall, Newtownbreda	383
Carrickmannon, Ballygowan	78
Carrowdore, Newtownards	131
Castle Gardens, Newtownards	489
Comber, Newtownards	411
Cottown, Bangor	35
Donaghadee, Donaghadee	405
Greyabbey, Newtownards	67
Killinchy, Comber	232
Kircubbin, Newtownards	54
Kirkistown, Cloughey	41
Leadhill, Belfast	172
Londonderry Model, Newtownards	278
Loughries, Newtownards	81
Millisle, Newtownards	187
Moneyrea, Newtownards	136
Newtownards Model, Newtownards	361
Newtownbreda, Belfast	212
O'Neill Memorial, Belfast	44
Portaferry, Newtownards	48
Portavogie, Newtownards	172
Victoria, Newtownards	584
Victoria, Ballyhalbert	98
West Winds, Newtownards	215
SECONDARY SCHOOLS	
Maintained	
St. Columba's Portaferry	380

	Numbers
Controlled	
Comber, Newtownards	523
Donaghadee, Donaghadee	515
Movilla, Newtownards	645
Scrabo, Newtownards	396
GRAMMAR SCHOOL	
Controlled	
Regent House, Newtownards	1,587
GRANT-MAINTAINED INTEGRATED	
Lagan College, Belfast	730

Notes:

1. Enrolment figures are taken from the annual school census, completed at January 1992.
2. Pupils enrolled in nursery classes in the primary schools are included in the enrolment figures.

Widgery Tribunal

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations the Government have received in 1992 concerning the 1972 Widgery tribunal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates: The Prime Minister has received one letter from the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) calling for the Widgery tribunal's findings to be re-examined. The previous and present Secretary of State for Northern Ireland received two similar letters. In addition, a number of letters on the general subject of "Bloody Sunday" have been received.

Departmental Environment Policies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who is the Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications of all of his Department's policies; when that person was appointed; what actions his Department has taken since the appointment of a responsible Minister; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I have recently been appointed as the Minister for these policies within Northern Ireland. I am now taking forward the policies outlined in the White Paper on "This Common Inheritance" and the first-year report on that White Paper, as they relate to Northern Ireland.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability Benefits

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the current number of applications still outstanding for disabled living allowance on 1 April, 1 May and 1 June, together with the weekly average for that period of *(a)* applications submitted and *(b)* applications cleared.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what measures his Department are considering to simplify the application procedures for the disability working allowance, disability living allowance and attendance allowance;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect on the take-up of benefits of the design of the application forms for disability living allowance and disability working allowances.

Mr. Scott: The introduction of the new claims process for disability living allowance, attendance allowance and disability working allowance has been widely welcomed by both disabled people and their organisations as better meeting the needs of disabled people and putting greater reliance on what they have to say about their own disabilities. Nevertheless, we are monitoring closely the effectiveness of the claim packs and process.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals have been heard by the disability appeal tribunals to date; what percentage of these have concerned *(a)* disability living allowance care component and *(b)* disability living allowance mobility component; and how many more are listed for hearing.

Mr. Scott: I have been informed by the office of the president of the Independent Tribunal Service that up to 10 June 1,436 appeals have been heard by disability appeal tribunals. These were all mobility allowance appeals.

On 8 June there were 317 cases listed for hearing.

Social Fund

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants of income support were repaying social fund loans during March; and how many of these were *(a)* under 60 years, *(b)* over 60 years and *(c)* in receipt of a disability premium.

Mr. Scott: The information available is in the table. It is not possible to isolate the figures for income support recipients alone.

	Number
Total loans being repaid	589,758
Loans being repaid by people under 60 (including people in receipt of Disability Premium)	571,911
Loans being repaid by people over 60	17,847
Loans being repaid by people in receipt of Disability Premium	33,857

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Moray of 8 June, *Official Report*, column 6, what was the 1992-93 social fund allocation; what was the total of social fund payments made in 1991-92, adjusted for inflation; and what is the difference between the estimated monthly social fund expenditures for 1992-93 and those of March 1992 expenditures.

Mr. Scott: Information about 1991-92 was contained in my reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 2 June at column *481*. Details of social fund discretionary budget allocations and discretionary monthly expenditure are in the Library. Monthly expenditure for 1992-93 will not be known until the end of the financial year.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing *(a)* the gross and *(b)* the net social fund budget on a per capita basis of the number of income support claimants in (i) cash and (ii) real terms for the years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Scott: Information on social fund expenditure in relation to income support caseload is in the table, except for 1992-93 for which information will not be available until the end of the year. Any comparison between net expenditure in 1988-89 and subsequent years should take into account the substantial additional expenditure made possible by the recycling of money received from loan repayments since 1988-89, as reflected within the higher gross amounts.

Social Fund Expenditure Per Capita of Income Support Caseload

	1988-89 £	*1989-90* £	[1]*1991-92* £
Gross	46·64	57·76	70·12
Gross 1992-93 Prices[1]	60·14	69·87	73·28
Net	35·27	31·53	39·97
Net 1992-93 Prices[1]	45·47	38·14	40·97

[1] Provisional

Real terms figures have been calculated using the current GDP deflator and may alter.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what the administrative cost is as a proportion of expenditure on the social fund for each year since its inception, including a forecast for 1992-93.

Mr. Scott: Information on social fund expenditure and administration costs for 1988-89 to 1990-91 is in the Library. Details of administration costs for 1991-92 are not yet available. No forecast has been made for 1992-93.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to publish the study into the social fund commissioned from the University of York's social policy research unit.

Mr. Scott: We expect the report to be published before the summer recess.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many disability living allowance claims have been refused as a result of the application not being made within the three-month qualifying period; and what information is sent to people whose claims are unsuccessful for this reason.

Mr. Scott: There have been no such cases. An application for disability living allowance may be made at any time. If the three-month qualifying period has not been completed at the date of application, provided the adjudication officer is satisfied that the customer meets the conditions of entitlement, an award may be made from the earliest date that it is completed.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many reviews for attendance allowance are outstanding as a result of the introduction of disability living allowance; and what is the target time for the processing of these reviews.

Mr. Scott: The administration of attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the target of clearing 60 per cent. of disability living allowance claims within 30 days is now being met.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the estimate in the 1990 White Paper "The Way Ahead" of the number of people that would benefit from the lower rate of disability living allowance for care or mobility costs has been met.

Mr. Scott: That estimate was for 1993-94. It is too soon to measure performance against such longer term targets.

Independent Living Fund

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people received help from the independent living fund during 1991-92; what was the average weekly amount awarded; and what was the total number of applications received during 1991-92, the percentage refused and reasons for refusal respectively.

Mr. Scott: At the end of March 1992 the independent living fund was paying 13,670 people. In addition, 1,132 people had ceased to receive payments during the year, giving a total of 14,802 people who received help from the fund during 1991-92.

The average weekly payment was £76 in April 1991 and rose to £95 at the end of March 1992.

The total number of applications received during 1991-92 was 16,677. Of these, 32·3 per cent.—5,385—were rejected, primarily because *(a)* the applicant had sufficient income to meet care costs; *(b)* the applicant had capital in excess of £8,000; *(c)* the applicant was not in receipt of higher rate attendance allowance; *(d)* the request was not one with which the fund could help.

Benefits (Young People)

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what benefits are available to a young person without a permanent home who is not on a youth training scheme.

Mr. Burt: Such a person may be entitled to the same benefits as those listed in my reply to the hon. Member on 9 June at column *135*, though housing benefit would depend upon the young person becoming liable to pay rent.

EC Proposals

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the experts his Department consults on European Community proposals relating to social security matters.

Mr. Burt: We consult a wide range of experts in various fields, depending on the nature of individual proposals.

Consultations take place with employers' organisations, pension experts, voluntary organisations, medical experts, the Industrial Injuries Advisory Committee and other specialists as appropriate.

Pension Age

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on changes in pension age under consideration by the Government.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 8 June at column *53*.

Compensation Recovery Unit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what amount was recouped by the Compensation Recovery Unit in its first 19 months of operation; what this was as an annual rate; what was the estimate of the annual rate made by Touche Ross in its report to the DSS in 1987, adjusted for inflation; and what was the estimate of this figure made by the Government when the 1989 Bill was introduced, adjusted for inflation.

Miss Widdecombe: Between September 1990 and March 1992 the compensation recovery unit recouped over £29 million, rising to over £32 million by April 1992. Further rises are expected. In annual terms receipts were equivalent to about £15 million in the first 19 months, or over £25 million in 1991-92.

In introducing the new legislation the Government used the 1987 figures compiled by Touche Ross as a broad indication of the likely level of receipts. The consultants estimated that once all cases subject to the old arrangements had been settled and if a small payment limit —SPL—of £1,500 was set, the value of recoverable benefits under a new scheme would probably range up from about £37 million—about £51 million at March 1992 prices. This forecast was subsequently revised downwards when a higher SPL of £2,500 was introduced for the commencement of the scheme.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the running costs of the compensation recovery unit by the end of 1991; and what these costs were as a percentage of the receipts of that unit for the same period.

Mr. Burt: The administrative costs of the compensation recovery unit from its inception in early 1990 until the end of 1991 were £3·8 million including start-up costs, or about 19 per cent. of total receipts. During the financial year 1991-92 running costs were £2 million or about 8 per cent. of total receipts. This percentage is expected to fall further over the next few years as receipts rise much faster than running costs.

Income Statistics

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the weekly income of an unemployed person including child care benefit but excluding tax, in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1992; and what this income would be if it had risen in line with (i) prices and (ii) earnings.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is in the table. The assumptions used are the same as those in the published tax/benefit model tables. The family type illustrated is that of a married man with a non-working wife and two children aged four and six.

The figures given are for total net income, after housing costs, on supplementary benefit income support. This gives a full picture of the income for this family type, including child benefit and any entitlement to out-of-work income-related benefits.

	£ per week
Total net income 1979	37·15
Total net income 1992	108·58
1979 figure uprated to 1992 by prices	94·97
1979 figure uprated to 1992[1] by earnings	124·93

[1] In order to uprate for earnings, a whole economy, seasonally adjusted figure has been used. The latest available is March 1992.

Departmental Environment Policies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security who is the Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications of all of his Department's policies; when that person was appointed; what actions his Department has taken since the appointment of a responsible Minister; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Lord Henley, was appointed the Department's environmental Minister in September 1990.

The Department is committed to making the fullest possible contribution to achieving the aims of the environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance". This includes having in place by the end of 1992 a departmental "environmental housekeeping" strategy.

The strategy statement, currently in preparation, will set out the Department's policy for the use of its resources, designed to ensure that full account is taken of the needs of the environment.

The Department is participating in the Government's campaign to reduce their energy consumption by 15 per cent. over the five years 1991 to 1996. In doing so we will reduce the Department's CO_2 production from the 1990-91 calculated figure of 202,000 tonnes. A total of £600,000 has been made available for investing in energy efficiency measures during 1992-93. This will enable offices to introduce energy and water saving devices. We are currently preparing departmental publicity about the need to conserve water. An article covering environmental issues appeared in the February 1992 edition of the DSS quarterly journal.

We are committed to ensuring that our purchasing activities take environmental considerations fully into account. To this end we will promote the use of "environmentally friendly" materials, processes and products in the goods and services we purchase.

We will continue to encourage more economical and effective use of paper in the Department and the use of recycled paper products where practicable and cost effective.

It is the Department's policy to purchase only diesel vehicles and to fit remaining petrol vehicles with catalytic convertors.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants of income support received reduced benefits in 1991 as a consequence of their receipt, or receipt by members of their family, of criminal injuries compensation.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. I understand that the information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

There is, however, a special rule in all the income-related benefits—income support, family credit, housing benefit, community charge benefit and disability working allowance—which provides that compensation payments arising from a personal or criminal injury which are placed on trust are disregarded indefinitely. In addition, payments can be made out of the trust in a wide range of circumstances without affecting the injured person's entitlement to benefit.

Keith Hamilton

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if the Benefits Agency will make a statement on the delays in Keith Hamilton's case, ref. PW 308877B.

Mr. Scott: Following the successful application for a review, full arrears of attendance allowance were sent on 3 June 1992. I understand that Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency wrote to the hon. Member on 11 June 1992 confirming this, explaining the reasons for and expressing his regret at the delays.

Legal Aid

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate has been made of the cost to the Benefits Agency arising from the implementation of paragraph 11 of the recent legal aid circular to justices' clerks.

Mr. Burt: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that he is not yet in a position to provide an estimate. The matter is being discussed with the Lord Chancellor's Department.

Information Disclosure

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what circumstances the Benefits Agency will disclose information concerning an individual's benefit entitlement to a third party.

Mr. Burt: The information about individuals held in the Benefits Agency's records, including details of benefits paid, is treated as strictly confidential and is not normally released to a third party without the consent of the person concerned. Benefits Agency staff can disclose information to people representing the individual, for example solicitors or advice workers acting on a claimant's behalf.

The agency is bound by the Data Protection Act 1984, and holds its records in accordance with the principles set out in the Act. In accordance with this Act there are occasions when information may be disclosed without the permission of the individual concerned, for example:

(a) because the court has made an order;
(b) when it is in the public interest for the information to be disclosed, for example to the police to assist with the investigation of a serious crime;
(c) to social services or a welfare body because someone is at risk;
(d) to another Government Department or public body when this is necessary to safeguard public funds.

WALES

Mortgage Repossessions

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate his Department has of the number of mortgage repossessions *(a)* in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney and *(b)* in Wales since December 1991.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the number of possessions in the United Kingdom for the half year to June 1992 will be published by the Council of Mortgage Lenders during the summer. The data for the same period from the Lord Chancellor's Department, giving the number of orders made as a result of mortgage possession actions by courts in Wales, will also be available then.

For England and Wales as a whole, the council estimates that measures taken since December will save some 55,000 possessions this year: 40,000 as a result of new procedures for dealing with arrears cases; and 15,000 as a result of the direct payment to lenders of the mortgage interest element of income support.

Departmental Environment Policies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales who is the Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications of all of his Department's policies; when that person was appointed; what actions his Department has taken since the appointment of a responsible Minister; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given earlier today by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Hospital Beds

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the hospitals in Wales which had consultant obstetric or general practitioner maternity beds in 1990-91, and give the numbers of beds of each type in each hospital.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is given in the table:

NHS hospitals in Wales with consultant obstetric or general practitioner maternity beds.

Hospital	*Average daily available beds*	
	Obstetrics	*GP Maternity*
HM Stanley	52·00	0·00
Ysbyty Maelor	53·08	0·00
Chirk	0·00	2·25
Catherine Gladstone	0·00	8·00
Bronglais	16·00	0·00
West Wales General	32·00	0·00
Nevill Hall	46·02	9·99
Royal Gwent	81·00	6·96
St. David's Bangor	61·00	0·00
Stanley Sailors	0·00	4·50
Bryn Beryl	0·00	4·77
Dolgellau and Barmouth	0·00	7·00

Hospital	Average daily available beds: Obstetrics	GP Maternity
Towyn	0·00	3·00
Princess of Wales	41·80	0·00
East Glamorgan	44·00	0·00
Llwynypia	11·45	0·00
Merthyr General	25·00	0·00
Aberdare	25·00	5·00
Caerphilly and District	40·00	0·00
Brecon War Memorial	0·00	6·00
Llandrindod Wells	0·00	4·00
Builth Cottage	0·00	3·00
Knighton	0·00	2·00
Machynlleth and District	0·00	2·00
Llanidloes	0·00	5·00
Victoria Memorial	0·00	8·00
Montgomery County Infirmary	0·00	4·50
University Hospital of Wales	70·67	0·00
St. David's, Cardiff	3·69	0·12
Llandough	62·29	0·00
Gorseinon	11·68	0·00
Morriston	75·38	0·00
Neath General	37·93	0·00
Withybush	31·05	8·95
TOTAL	821·04	95·04

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, further to her answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, columns 249-50, she will provide a breakdown of employment by industry and ethnic origin for *(a)* men and *(b)* women broken down into (i) West Indian-Guyanese, (ii) Indian, (iii) Pakistani-Bangladeshi and (iv) all other origins.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available estimates are given in the table.

Employment[2] by industry and ethnic origin; average spring 1989-91
Persons in employment[2] aged 16 and over

Great Britain
thousands

	SIC 1980[3]	Men: West Indian-Guyanese	Men: Indian	Men: Pakistani-Bangladeshi	Men: All other ethnic minority groups[6]	Women: West Indian-Guyanese	Women: Indian	Women: Pakistani-Bangladeshi	Women: All other ethnic minority groups[6]
	All industries[4]	108	205	100	167	109	133	27	124
0	Agriculture, forestry, fishing	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
1	Energy and water supply	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
2	Extraction of minerals, metal manufacture, etc.	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
3	Metal goods, engineering and vehicles	17	30	12	15	[1]	11	[1]	[1]
4	Other manufacturing	[1]	22	20	10	[1]	24	[1]	[1]
44-45	Footwear, clothing and leather goods	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	11	[1]	[1]
5	Construction	11	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
6	Distribution, hotels, catering and repairs	18	62	35	53	17	35	[1]	35
61-63	Wholesale distribution	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
64-65	Retail distribution	10	43	16	18	10	25	[1]	14
66	Hotels and catering	[1]	[1]	16	27	[1]	[1]	[1]	18
7	Transport and communications	19	23	11	11	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
79	Postal services and telecommunications	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
8	Banking and finance, etc.	10	20	[1]	21	11	17	[1]	14
83	Business services	[1]	13	[1]	13	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
9	Other services	19	29	[1]	43	61	34	[1]	53
91	Public administration, national defence, etc.	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
93	Education	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
95	Medical-health-veterinary services	[1]	12	[1]	12	26	12	[1]	20
96	Other services to the public[5]	[1]	[1]	[1]	10	17	[1]	[1]	14

Source: Labour Force Surveys three-year average.
[1] Less than 10,000 in cell: estimate not shown.
[2] Excluding those on Government employment and training programmes.
[3] Results are shown for all SIC divisions, and for classes accounting for at least 30,000 persons from ethnic minority groups.
[4] The totals include those who did not specify industry.
[5] Comprises all other public services excluding sanitary, research and development, recreational and domestic services.
[6] Excludes whites; includes those of mixed origin.

Youth Training

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the allowances paid to people on youth training were last increased.

Mr. McLoughlin: The minimum youth training allowance for 16-year-olds was increased to £29·50 per week from 4 July 1988, and for those aged 17 and above has been £35·00 since 1 April 1986.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she has any plans to increase the level of allowance to those on YT.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are no plans to increase the minimum levels of the YT allowance. Employers benefit considerably from their participation in YT, and are therefore strongly encouraged to supplement the minimum allowances.

Departmental Environment Policies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who is the Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications of all of her Department's policies; when that person was appointed; what actions her Department has taken since the appointment of a responsible Minister; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Employment Action

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been placed on employment action in Scotland in each of the months since the scheme started.

Mr. McLoughlin: The table shows the number of people in Scotland receiving employment action allowances as at each count date, plus the number starting to receive an allowance in the month ending at each count date since the programme started.

Date of Count	*Allowance Starts in Month*	*Receiving Allowances on the Count Date*
10 October 1991	0	0
14 November 1991	69	66
12 December 1991	213	263
9 January 1992	132	381
13 February 1992	563	842
12 March 1992	510	1,214
9 April 1992	559	1,535
14 May 1992	550	1,789

Source: The Employment Service.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, columns *469-70*, if she will make a statement on the reasons for her Department's spending on advertising and promotion being expected to fall between 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 12 June 1992]:* Advertising and publicity expenditure, subject to the Department's overall public expenditure survey settlement, is determined for each financial year on the basis of prevailing requirements to publicise the services and advice provided by the Department.

Expenditure for 1991-92 included two major advertising campaigns, (a) the training and enterprise council training campaign to publicise the role and existence of the new network of training and enterprise councils and (b) the "Just the Job" campaign to inform unemployed people about the range of help and advice available through the Employment Service. No major advertising campaigns are planned by the Department during 1992-93.

TRANSPORT

M65

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans the Government have to extend the M65 eastwards.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department has no such plans.

M3

Mr. Milligan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects that the M3 will be completed with the final section through Twyford Down.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Subject to the main contract starting this autumn, the final section of the M3 between Bar End, Winchester and Compton is planned to be completed by autumn 1994.

Public Transport (VAT)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the effect on total passenger miles travelled on public transport of the imposition of *(a)* a 5 per cent. and *(b)* a 17·5 per cent. VAT rate on public transport fares; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have made no detailed assessment of the effects of the imposition of value added tax on public transport passenger mileage. Agreement reached by Finance Ministers enables us to maintain our existing zero rates.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all those functions and areas in his Department and associated agencies that have been identified for market testing in the wake of the White Paper "Competing for Quality".

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend expects shortly to complete his consideration of the proposals before him and the programme will then be announced.

Motor Cycles

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to introduce stage 2 noise limits on motor cycles under the relevant EEC directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Yes. It is the policy of the Government that motor-cycle manufacturers should keep up with the rest of the motor industry by designing vehicles that use the most modern technology to reduce noise at source.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to stop the sale of motor cycle exhaust systems which are labelled not for road use.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Regulation 57(4) of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 already provides that a motor cycle shall not be used on a road if it is fitted with an exhaust system marked with the words "not for road use" or words to the like effect. Section 76(3) of the Road Traffic Act 1988 makes it an offence to sell or supply an exhaust system which contravenes this regulation, the maximum penalty for which is £1,000. The Government have no plans to extend the on-road prohibition to off-road use where it would adversely affect machines used in competition.

EC Proposals

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the experts his Department consults on European Community proposals relating to transport matters.

Mr. Norris: The Department does not have a fixed list of experts which it consults on European Community proposals. Experts are consulted as and when necessary: the total number is large, and a list could not be assembled except at disproportionate cost.

Roads, London

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list each scheme in his Department's current programme, together with the cost at current prices, for *(a)* junction improvements in the Greater London area, *(b)* other road improvements in the Greater London area and *(c)* new roads in the Greater London area.

Mr. Norris: The trunk road major improvement programme for London is as follows:

	[1]*Cost £ million*
(a) Junctions	
A2 Kidbrooke Park road interchange	7·0
A3 Robin Hood Gate junction	27·4
A3 Hook interchange improvement	11·5
A4 Henlys corner/Waggoners corner junction improvement	9·6
A12 Eastern avenue/Whalebone lane junction improvement	3·9
A12/A127 Gallows corner intersection improvement	1·3
A13/A112 Prince Regents lane	36·9
A13/A117 junction	28·5
A13 Butcher row junction improvement	1·3
A13 West India Dock road junction improvement (interim)	3·3
A13 West India Dock road junction improvement (final)	1·4
A13 Blackwall tunnel/Cotton street junctions	3·0
A13 Movers lane junction improvement	24·3
A40 Long lane junction improvement	40·2
A40 Gipsy corner junction	35·9
A40 Western circus junction improvement	37·3
A406 Golders Green road junction	24·5
A406 Regent's Park road junction improvement	70·1
M1 Junction 1 improvement	5·1
M4 Junction 4 and 4A improvement	14·8
(b) Other road improvement	
A406 Popes lane/Western avenue	83·4
A406 Hanger lane to Harrow road	111·7
A406 Ironbridge to Neasden improvement	5·3
A406 East of Falloden way—Finchley high road	57·6
A406 Bounds Green/Green lanes improvement	133·4
A406 Dysons road/Hall lane	48·3
A406 East of Silver street A1010	29·8
A406 Chingford road to Hale End road	117·4
A13 Ironbridge to Canning Town improvement	50·7
A40 Long lane—West End road improvement	4·6
A205 Catford town centre improvement	9·5
(c) New roads	
A1/M1 Link—Scratchwood	33·0
A12 Hackney Wick to M11 link	180·6
A13 Heathway—Wennington	170·0
A23 Coulsdon inner relief road	19·0
A102 Blackwall tunnel spur	39·0
A102 Blackwall tunnel third bore	105·0
A406 East London river crossing	283·1

[1] Works and land but excluding VAT.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money was spent in each year since 1979 on *(a)* new road building and *(b)* road improvements in the Greater London area; and what is the planned expenditure for the next five years.

Mr. Norris: Spend on major trunk road schemes, excluding land, in London from 1982-83 onwards is given in the table.

Year	*£ million*
1982-83	30·4
1983-84	20·7
1984-85	19·7
1985-86	54·3
1986-87	85·1
1987-88	88·0
1988-89	61·7
1989-90	118·9
1990-91	138·9
1991-92	134·1
1992-93	123·3

To provide earlier figures or the breakdown requested between new construction and improvements would involve disproportionate costs. The forecast expenditure for the current year is £123·3 million. Decisions about expenditure in the future have still to be taken.

Departmental Environment Policies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of Sate for Transport who is the Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications for all of his Department's policies; when that person was appointed; what actions his Department has taken since the appointment of a responsible Minister; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government are again appointing a Minister within each Department to take particular responsibility for environmental aspects of that Department's policies and programmes. A list of nominated Ministers will be announced shortly. I shall be the nominated Minister for my Department.

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assistance his Department has provided to British Nuclear Fuels in its development of transport flasks for the air carriage of plutonium.

Mr. Norris: None. The development of such flasks is the responsibility of British Nuclear Fuels. The Department's function is to assess the designs against the provisions of the International Atomic Energy Agency's regulations for the safe transport of radioactive material.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Commission

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to announce the membership of the commission to be established to deal with local government re-organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I am inviting the following people to serve as members of the Local Government Commission under the chairmanship of Sir John Banham:

David Ansbro
Professor Michael Chisholm
Ken Ennals
Brian Hill
Councillor Mary Leigh
Ann Levick
Robert Scruton
Clive Wilkinson
Baroness Wilcox

This is a strong, independent commission with a balanced membership covering a wide range of interests and experience. We intend to announce further members of the commission very shortly.

Endangered Species

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what efforts have been made by his Department to encourage greater adherence to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species by other countries.

Mr. Maclean: The convention's secretariat bears the primary responsibility for ensuring that the requirements of the convention are met. Within the European Community, the European Commission is responsible for ensuring adherence to the EC regulation which implements the convention. We draw evidence of any apparent problems to the attention of the country concerned and either the secretariat or commission as appropriate. We introduce any trade restrictions which the secretariat recommends to encourage compliance.

We are also very active in promoting improvements in the quality of implementation. We asked the European Commission last October to propose substantially stricter controls within the Community and this they have done. Further, with our EC partners, we have taken 1,400 decisions since 1984 to suspend trade in particular species from particular countries because we were not satisfied with their assessments of its impact. At the conference of the parties to the convention in March, we pressed successfully for similar action to be taken world wide. Further, we played a leading part at the conference in introducing measures to ensure compliance with the convention's transport requirement by providing for suspensions of trade in birds suffering high mortality in transit.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to encourage the special protection of endangered species travelling on migration routes which are not included in officially designated protected areas.

Mr. Maclean: The Government already support the protection of endangered migratory species, both nationally and internationally. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 gives strict protection to endangered migratory birds and mammals in Great Britain. The United Kingdom has participated actively since 1985 as a party to the international convention on the conservation of migratory species of wild animals, known as the Bonn convention. At present the United Kingdom holds the chairmanship of the standing committee of the convention.

In addition, the United Kingdom sponsored negotiations under the Bonn convention of an agreement on the conservation of bats in Europe. The agreement was concluded during the third conference of the parties to the convention in Geneva in September 1991. The United Kingdom signed the bats agreement when it was opened for signature in London on 4 December 1991 and my Department is providing its secretariat.

The United Kingdom delegation played a leading role in the conclusion at the same conference of an agreement on the conservation of small cetaceans of the Baltic and North seas. The agreement was signed by the United Kingdom on 16 April this year and my Department is financing its interim secretariat, based at the sea mammals research unit in Cambridge.

The EC birds directive makes specific provision for the protection of migratory birds and their feeding grounds and the Government are implementing this by the designation of special protection areas (SPAs), now 52 in number, and through the indentification of potential SPAs, both of which receive protection under the planning system.

Pollution

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by his Department in implementing *(a)* the polluter pays principle and *(b)* the user pays principle.

Mr. Maclean: The polluter pays principle is at the centre of the Government's approach to environmental policy. If the polluter pays the cost of meeting environmental controls, the user will also pay through the resulting increase in prices and charges.

Public Inquiries

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many public inquiries, both public and with written representations, were held during the past year to the nearest convenient date and for each of the previous 10 years respectively.

Mr. Baldry: This is a matter for the chief executive and I have asked him to write to my hon. Friend.

EC Proposals

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the experts his Department consults on European Community proposals relating to environmental matters.

Mr. Maclean: My Department consults as widely as necessary to ensure that European Community proposals are given full consideration.

Departmental Environment Policies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who is the Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications of all of his Department's policies; when that person was appointed; what actions his Department has taken since the appointment of a responsible Minister; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Government are again appointing a Minister within each Government Department to take particular responsibility for environmental aspects of that Department's policies and programmes. The list will be announced shortly.

Mineral Planning

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to amend mineral planning guidance note 3.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 22 May 1992 to the hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, North (Ms. Walley), *Official Report*, column *269*.

Orimulsion

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he will take to discourage the use of orimulsion for the purposes of steam-raising in Britain and the rest of the EC.

Mr. Maclean: Any proposed use of orimulsion is likely to arise within processes subject to integrated pollution control by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP) under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Such processes cannot be carried out without an authorisation. Authorisations must include conditions to ensure that the best available techniques not entailing excessive cost will be used to prevent or minimise the release of prescribed substances and for rendering any such releases harmless. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans for other action in relation orimulsion.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what levels or proportion of *(a)* sulphur and *(b)* other toxic or harmful substances are estimated to be released as a result of the combustion of orimulsion for the purposes of electricity generation according to the current proposals for its use.

Mr. Maclean: Although the burning of orimulsion produces significantly more sulphur dioxide and particulate matter than does, for example, that of heavy fuel oil, the quantities of pollutants ultimately released to the environment depend not only on the type of fuel used, but on the abatement techniques used to control releases.

The operation of combustion processes in which orimulsion is burnt require authorisation by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP) under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. In granting an authorisation, HMIP requires the best available techniques not entailing excessive cost (BATNEEC) to be used by the operator to prevent or reduce emissions from the process.

Guidance on what constitutes BATNEEC together with the levels of releases achievable are set out in the chief inspector's guidance note to inspectors "Combustion Processes, Large Boilers and Furnaces 59MW(th) and Over", copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Details of applications for, and any subsequent authorisations granted for all processes controlled by HMIP, are placed on the public registers held at HMIP regional offices which may be inspected by anyone, free of charge.

Waste Management

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to decide on certificates of technical competence for the Waste Management Industry Training and Advisory Board; what representations he has received on the matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The proposal for certificates of technical competence for waste managers forms part of the new waste management licensing system under part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Powers exist in section 74 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 for the Secretary of State to prescribe the qualifications and experience required of a person for the purposes of deciding whether the management of a waste site is to be in the hands of a technically competent person. As the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Baroness Blatch, announced in another place on 10 October 1990—*Official Report*, columns 289-90—the Department of the Environment commissioned the Waste Management Industry Training and Advisory Board (WAMITAB) to prepare a system of waste management qualifications that might be so prescribed. WAMITAB delivered its report on these proposals in April this year.

The only representations made to my Department about the WAMITAB proposals since they were submitted have come from WAMITAB itself. The proposals are being examined and will be further discussed with WAMITAB. When Ministers have reached a view on the suitability of WAMITAB's proposals, this will be announced and will form part of a wider public consultation on waste management licensing later this summer. Final decisions on certificates of technical competence will then be made, in the light of that public consultation, so that regulations giving effect to the decisions may be laid before Parliament. Subject to the emerging timetable for the proposed environment agency, it is intended to bring these regulations into force in April 1993.

Earth Summit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Nottingham, East of 5 June, *Official Report*, column *665*, if he will set out *(a)* the number of officials from each Government Department in attendance at the Earth

summit, *(b)* the representation from the British diplomatic posts in Brazil and the Forestry Commission respectively, *(c)* the names of individuals and organisations holding observer status with the United Kingdom delegation and *(d)* the cost of supporting the United Kingdom delegation to the Rio conference and related events in Brazil.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom delegation consisted of the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Minister for Overseas Development, myself and 24 officials from the Department of the Environment, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Overseas Development Administration and the Department of Trade and Industry. In addition, there were five representatives from our diplomatic posts in Brazil and one official from the Forestry Commission.

Eight junior support staff also attended the conference. The staff involved were needed to service not only the plenary sessions of the conference but the specialised sectoral working groups that were set up and where much of the detailed negotiating was done. Other staff were required to provide office support facilities and to liaise with the local authorities over such matters as transport and security.

The 13 observers attached to the United Kingdom delegation were:

Ann Clwyd – Opposition overseas aid spokesperson
Richard Sandbrook – International Institute on Environment and Development
Barry Coates – World Wide Fund for Nature
Vicky Johnson – Action Aid
Patricia Feeney – Oxfam } Shared one place.
Joan Davidson – Oxfam }
Sir John Chatfield – Association of County Councils
John Harman – Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Rod Aspinwall – Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment
Peter Bright – International Chamber of Commerce UK
David Lea – Trade Union Congress
Clare Ramsaran – United Nations Conference on Environment and Development for Youth
Professor Iain Thornton – Imperial college
Julie Hill – Green Alliance } Shared one place.
Graham Wynne – Royal Society for the Protection of Birds }

The estimated cost of the delgation's travel and subsistence, including hotel costs will be about £190,000. Non-governmental organisations were responsible for their own travel and accommodation expenses.

The estimated total administrative cost of the conference, including office facilities, transport and communications will be about £500,000.

Nitrogen Dioxide

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, column *189*, what steps are being taken by his Department to implement the recommendations of the report by Warren Spring Laboratory on nitrogen dioxide levels in the United Kingdom, and specifically the recommendations for more detailed monitoring using diffusion tubes and chemiluminescent monitors in London where the heaviest concentrations of nitrogen dioxide were found.

Mr. Maclean: My Department will be arranging, through Warren Spring Laboratory and with the help of the local authorities concerned, to continue national nitrogen dioxide monitoring with diffusion tubes on a permanent basis, and to enhance the level of detail in London and some other urban areas.

Chemiluminescent monitoring is a much more expensive technique and is therefore less well suited to examining the patterns of nitrogen dioxide distribution within cities. Some expansion of nitrogen dioxide monitoring using this technique is none-the-less already planned and will be taken forward with the benefit of advice from the air quality of urban air review group, taking account of the report's recommendations.

Coastal Zone

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action is currently being undertaken by his Department in preparation for forthcoming EC legislation on coastal zone planning.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The Environment Committee of the House of Commons for the Session 1991-92 has issued a report on coastal zone protection and planning. This includes recommendations for United Kingdom involvement in development of EC coastal policies. The Government will respond to that report in due course.

Territorial Waters (Planning)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment is he will make it his policy to extend planning controls to the 12-nautical mile limit of territorial waters around the United Kingdom.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The Environment Select Committee made several recommendations in their second report of last Session on the issue of extending harmonisation landward planning control and seaward regulations as far as the 12-nautical mile limit of territorial waters. We are considering the report and will respond in due course.

Coastal Zone

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to consolidate legislation relating to activities in the coastal zone.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The Environment Committee of the House of Commons for the Session 1991-92 has issued a report on coastal zone protection and planning. This included recommendations for the consolidation of legislation relating to activities in the coastal zone. The Government will respond to that report in due course.

SCOTLAND

Scottish Economic Council

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the present membership of the Scottish Economic Council, the dates on which it has met in the last two years and its terms of reference.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* Following is the information:

Membership

The membership of the Scottish Economic Council is as follows:

Chairman
Rt. Hon. Ian Lang, MP

Vice Chairman
Mr. Allan Stewart, MP

Members
Dr. James G. Adamson
Mr. David A. Berridge
Baroness Carnegy of Lour
Mr. Campbell Christie
Sir Robert Cowan
Mrs. Christine Davis
Sir Robin Duthie
Mr. Ron Garrick
Sir Matthew Goodwin
Mr. Ian Grant
Mr. James Gulliver
Professor Michael Hamlin
Mr. Alan F. Hodgson
Mr. William Y. Hughes
Mr. J. Raymond Johnstone
Mrs. Barbara Kelly
Mr. J. Clive Lewis
Mr. Douglas MacDiarmid
Professor Donald MacKay
Dr. Christopher Masters
Mr. James Miller
Councillor John Mullin
Sir David Nickson
Mr. David M. Paterson
Mr. Peter Runciman
Mr. Alan Tripp
Professor William A. Turmeau
Mr. Christopher Wilkins
Mr. Ian C. Wood

Meetings
The council has met over the past 2 years on the following occasions:

16 February 1990
8 June 1990
19 October 1990
22 February 1991
7 June 1991
25 October 1991
21 February 1992

Terms of Reference
The council provides a forum for discussion and advice to Ministers by people prominent in industrial and economic life in Scotland, on a variety of issues affecting the Scottish economy. Members are appointed in an individual capacity and not as representatives of any particular organisation or interest.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, and overall in his Department are members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:* At 1 April 1992 the total number of staff employed in the Scottish Office and associated Departments who have described themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority was 27, or 0·4 per cent. Of that number, one grade 7 is so described, or 0·2 per cent.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:* My Department does not conduct recruitment for top grades.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origin of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:* My Department conducted a voluntary survey of the ethnic origins of staff in 1987, a reminder exercise in 1989, and thereafter all new entrants have been invited to complete questionnaires. I have no plan to conduct a further survey.

We achieved an 87 per cent. response rate from the exercise, and 0·4 per cent. of staff have described themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority. The economically active ethnic minority population in the Lothian area is 0·6 per cent.

HEALTH

Bowel Complaints

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by regional health authority for each year for the last five years, and for this year to date, the number of new cases diagnosed of patients suffering from cancer of the rectum and colon; and if she will show in her answer the number who have since died from the complaint.

Mr. Sackville: Information for 1982 to 1986, the latest date for which figures are available, is shown in the table.

Registrations of newly diagnosed cases of malignant neoplasms of the colon (ICD 153) by regional health authority (RHA), 1982 to 1986

RHA	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Northern	984	932	962	908	956
Yorkshire	1,074	1,132	1,086	1,073	1,099
Trent	1,384	1,458	1,437	1,328	1,420
East Anglia	586	642	641	619	693
North West Thames	723	859	637	738	840
North East Thames	1,066	998	921	598	863
South East Thames	1,044	898	1,053	1,039	1,041
South West Thames	919	873	923	790	863
Wessex	1,014	1,116	1,078	1,022	1,045
Oxford	701	633	660	669	677
South Western	981	940	1,024	1,123	965
West Midlands	1,397	1,431	1,481	1,646	1,577
Mersey	629	642	732	696	736
North Western	1,274	1,271	1,328	1,225	1,234
Wales	832	787	877	969	767

Registrations of newly diagnosed cases of malignant neoplasms of the rectum, rectosigmoid junction and anus (ICD 154) by regional health authority (RHA), 1982 to 1986

RHA	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Northern	610	667	597	604	617
Yorkshire	756	842	822	757	771
Trent	920	1,034	942	1,003	858
East Anglia	345	431	417	414	440
North West Thames	418	473	401	442	471
North East Thames	669	572	543	437	522
South East Thames	606	578	654	569	600
South West Thames	511	515	519	455	468
Wessex	523	505	535	518	547
Oxford	372	359	410	365	357
South Western	607	597	670	700	603
West Midlands	991	909	1,018	1,088	1,071
Mersey	482	417	489	501	523
North Western	817	856	797	763	804
Wales	726	745	763	789	675

Deaths from malignant neoplasms of the colon (ICD 153) by regional health authority (RHA), 1982 to 1991.

RHA	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Northern	645	667	720	737	656	672	620	745	659	722
Yorkshire	784	742	753	792	755	761	777	798	792	781
Trent	880	910	976	1,000	947	946	1,042	1,087	1,016	1,032
East Anglia	392	423	440	439	467	489	500	477	497	478
North West Thames	639	629	714	660	707	665	696	687	701	669
North East Thames	775	750	744	745	717	782	758	804	801	769
South East Thames	799	813	886	890	830	862	868	882	909	832
South West Thames	669	678	727	718	703	723	989	690	653	669
Wessex	676	663	683	687	698	708	732	763	761	736
Oxford	397	359	447	445	482	467	442	516	490	464
South Western	709	711	826	784	767	838	853	805	861	829
West Midlands	1,038	980	1,120	1,136	1,137	1,190	1,171	1,135	1,221	1,152
Mersey	540	515	572	576	530	568	545	544	548	582
North Western	911	843	962	924	882	947	936	934	879	935
Wales	614	595	639	723	718	733	735	729	714	713

Deaths from malignant neoplasms of the rectum, rectosigmoid junction and anus (ICD 154) by regional health authority (RHA), 1982 to 1991.

RHA	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Northern	378	442	401	402	424	419	414	415	408	445
Yorkshire	429	454	467	423	432	480	449	443	443	441
Trent	549	637	588	626	538	542	576	589	595	579
East Anglia	203	232	234	230	248	149	239	221	213	229
North West Thames	297	338	326	315	303	291	304	279	285	312
North East Thames	408	418	379	383	353	342	349	373	350	353
South East Thames	396	434	438	397	402	376	397	390	419	361
South West Thames	306	371	331	321	340	311	312	310	315	297
Wessex	284	331	303	344	349	303	345	303	297	304
Oxford	223	231	237	200	216	234	210	254	233	242
South Western	341	445	383	400	376	386	382	386	393	393
West Midlands	598	637	655	707	674	642	652	670	631	578
Mersey	279	331	327	372	315	274	272	265	291	320
North Western	487	581	552	521	516	520	504	514	495	509
Wales	334	383	396	389	357	297	346	336	316	324

Mergers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which district health authority mergers *(a)* have taken place since 1 April 1990 and *(b)* are under consideration.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is as follows:

Approved mergers

New authority	Old authorities	Date
Bloomsbury and Islington	Bloomsbury/Islington	17 September 1991
Leeds	Leeds East/Leeds West	1 April 1991
South Birmingham	Central Birmingham/South Birmingham	1 April 1991
North-east Warwickshire	Rugby/North Warwickshire	1 April 1991
Bristol and District	Bristol and Weston/Frenchay/Southmead	1 October 1991
Gloucestershire	Cheltenham and district/Gloucester	24 February 1992
North-west Anglia	West Norfolk and Wisbech/Peterborough	1 April 1992
Dorset	East Dorset/West Dorset	1 April 1992
North Nottinghamshire	Central Nottingham/Bassetlaw	1 April 1992

New authority	Old authorities	Date
East and North Hertfordshire	East Hertfordshire/North Hertfordshire	1 April 1992
North Durham	North-west Durham/Durham	1 April 1992
South-east London	Lewisham and North Southwark/Camberwell/West Lambeth	[1]1 April 1993
Buckinghamshire	Aylesbury Vale/Wycombe/Milton Keynes	[1]1 April 1993
Suffolk	West Suffolk/East Suffolk	[1]1 April 1993
North Worcestershire	Bromsgrove and Redditch/Kidderminster	[1]1 October 1992
(Name to be decided)	York/Harrogate/Scarborough/Northallerton/Airedale (part)	To be decided
(Name to be decided)	Bradford/Airedale (part)	To be decided

[1] Proposed start date.

Counterfeit Medicines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to stop the import of counterfeit medicines; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Any reports of alleged import of counterfeit medicines into the United Kingdom are urgently investigated by the enforcement unit of the Medicines Control Agency. The United Kingdom licensing system covering the import, sale and production, of medicinal products is continually kept under review to ensure appropriate safeguards against counterfeit products are maintained.

Medical Treatment

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what specific steps she proposes to take to ensure that the internal market for medical treatment within the national health service does not prejudice *(a)* the resources currently available for observation, research or innovation within some larger and longer-founded institutions and *(b)* the level of reserves of nursing and ancilliary services available for emergencies and relapses of patients during post-operative recuperation.

Mr. Sackville: The introduction of a new national health service research and development (R and D) strategy marks our commitment to increasing the resources devoted to R and D for the national health service. Although staffing levels are primarily decisions for local management, the national health service reforms provide an effective mechanism for targeting resources where they are most responsive to patients' needs, including post-operative recuperation.

Surgery

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the average weekly number of theatre sessions for each regional health authority for each year since 1985 and for the current year to date.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is given in the table. Information about operating theatre usage has been collected centrally only since 1987. Figures for the year ending March 1992 are not yet available centrally.

Operating theatre sessions: Average number per week

Regional health authority	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Northern	935	969	963	1,002
Yorkshire	942	969	969	996
Trent	1,136	1,189	1,255	1,225
East Anglian	567	566	588	583
North West Thames	852	1,067	927	858
North East Thames	1,125	1,099	1,158	1,183
South East Thames	1,041	1,058	1,129	1,143
South West Thames	650	789	827	855
Wessex	772	796	810	795
Oxford	599	607	623	603
South Western	864	980	964	961
West Midlands	1,437	1,437	1,444	1,475
Mersey	762	774	825	832
North Western	1,403	1,434	1,474	1,459
Special health authorities	247	284	285	287
ENGLAND	13,323	14,018	14,241	14,258

Source: KH08.

Continuing Care Beds

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance her Department issues to health authorities regarding the discharge of patients from continuing care beds to private residential or nursing homes.

Mr. Yeo: Guidance "Discharge of patients from hospital—HC(89)5", on discharge procedures was issued to health authorities in February 1989. A copy is available in the Library.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, by health authority area, the numbers of continuing care beds available in hospitals, for occupation by elderly people; and what is the average length of stay in such beds.

Mr. Yeo: The table shows, for each health authority, the number of beds in wards designated for elderly patients. Continuing care beds are not separately identified. The average length of stay in these beds is 36·2 days.

Number of beds available in wards designated general patient – elderly in 1990-91

	Number
Northern Regional Health Authority	3,683
Hartlepool	157
North Tees	160
South Tees	244
East Cumbria	279
South Cumbria	269
West Cumbria	194
Darlington	144
Durham	173
North West Durham	121
South West Durham	179
Northumberland	339
Gateshead	216
Newcastle	457
North Tyneside	185
South Tyneside	171
Sunderland	395
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	3,909
Hull	239
East Yorkshire	178
Grimsby	152
Scunthorpe	223
Northallerton	95
York	236
Scarborough	177
Harrogate	176
Bradford	340
Airedale	218
Calderdale	240
Huddersfield	256
Dewsbury	175
Leeds Western	442
Leeds Eastern	386
Wakefield	168
Pontefract	209
Trent Regional Health Authority	4,411
North Derbyshire	333
South Derbyshire	434
Leicestershire	758
North Lincolnshire	257
South Lincolnshire	276
Bassetlaw	105
Central Nottinghamshire	282
Nottingham	572
Barnsley	273
Doncaster	283
Rotherham	250
Sheffield	588
East Anglian Regional Health Authority	2,373
Cambridge	344
Peterborough	238
West Suffolk	295
East Suffolk	426
Norwich	503
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	204
West Norfolk and Wisbech	251
Huntingdon	112
North West Thames Regional Health Authority	3,173
North Bedfordshire	238
South Bedfordshire	169
North Hertfordshire	203
East Hertfordshire	209
North West Hertfordshire	256
South West Hertfordshire	184
Barnet	473
Harrow	169
Hillingdon	238
Hounslow and Spelthorne	230
Ealing	131
Riverside	255
Parkside	418
North East Thames Regional Health Authority	3,483
Basildon and Thurrock	285
Mid Essex	253
North East Essex	241
West Essex	214
Southend	214
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	335
Hampstead	130
Bloomsbury	76
Islington	102
City and Hackney	149
Newham	248
Tower Hamlets	225
Enfield	209
Haringey	221
Redbridge	236
Waltham Forest	346
South East Thames Regional Health Authority	3,212
Brighton	229
Eastbourne	290
Hastings	254
South East Kent	316
Canterbury and Thanet	298
Dartford and Gravesham	166
Maidstone	129
Medway	228
Tunbridge Wells	163
Bexley	138
Greenwich	189
Bromley	249
West Lambeth	142
Camberwell	164
Lewisham and North Southwark	259
South West Thames Regional Health Authority	2,566
North West Surrey	157
West Surrey and North East Hants	174
South West Surrey	224
Mid Surrey	133
East Surrey	180
Chichester	98
Mid Downs	218
Worthing	352
Croydon	200
Kingston and Esher	231
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	166
Wandsworth	189
Merton and Sutton	244
Wessex Regional Health Authority	2,780
East Dorset	583
West Dorset	238
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	441
Southampton and South West Hampshire	322
Winchester	186
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	165
Salisbury	164
Swindon	174
Bath	378
Isle of Wight	127
Oxford Regional Health Authority	1,647
East Berkshire	165
West Berkshire	328
Aylesbury Vale	124
Wycombe	205
Milton Keynes	83
Kettering	295
Northampton	220
Oxfordshire	227
South Western Regional Health Authority	3,240
Bristol and Weston	206
Frenchay	396
Southmead	84
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	395
Exeter	367

	Number
North Devon	183
Plymouth	414
Torbay	221
Cheltenham	262
Gloucester	296
Somerset	417
West Midlands Regional Health Authority	4,846
Bromsgrove and Redditch	87
Herefordshire	157
Kidderminster and District	136
Worcester and District	214
Shropshire	263
Mid Staffordshire	210
North Staffordshire	643
South East Staffordshire	372
Rugby	75
North Warwickshire	131
South Warwickshire	226
Central Birmingham	162
East Birmingham	206
North Birmingham	160
South Birmingham	334
West Birmingham	341
Coventry	4
Dudley	196
Sandwell	234
Solihull	84
Walsall	286
Wolverhampton	326
Mersey Regional Health Authority	2,047
Chester	206
Crewe	259
Halton	67
Macclesfield	108
Warrington	96
Liverpool	368
St. Helens and Knowsley	192
Southport and Formby	153
South Sefton	212
Wirral	387
North Western Regional Health Authority	4,406
Lancaster	189
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	409
Preston	138
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	258
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	264
West Lancashire	78
Chorley and South Ribble	118
Bolton	283
Bury	210
North Manchester	230
Central Manchester	142
South Manchester	298
Oldham	194
Rochdale	166
Salford	290
Stockport	382
Tameside and Glossop	230
Trafford	210
Wigan	317
Special Health Authorities	127
The Hospitals for Sick Children	0
The National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery	0
Moorfields Eye Hospital	0
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	0
Royal Brompton National Heart and Lung Hospital	0
The Royal Marsden Hospital	0
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	127
The Eastman Dental Hospital	0
England	45,902

Source: KHO3.

Employment Statistics

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the number of practice managers of health centres who are employed on Whitley council salary grade 4 or less in *(a)* the Northern regional health authority, *(b)* Sunderland district health authority and *(c)* England and Wales;

(2) if she will list the number of single-handed general practitioner practices which employ *(a)* 0 to two staff (full-time equivalent), *(b)* three to five staff (full-time equivalent), *(c)* five to 10 staff (full-time equivalent) and *(d)* more than 10 staff (full-time equivalent) in (i) the Northern regional health authority, (ii) Sunderland district health authority and (iii) England and Wales.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally.

Single Practices

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the number of single-handed practices which have patient lists of *(a)* 1,000 or less, *(b)* 2,000 and *(c)* 3,000 or more in (i) the Northern regional health authority, (ii) Sunderland district health authority and (iii) England and Wales;

(2) if she will list the number of single general practitioner practices in the *(a)* Northern regional health authority, *(b)* Sunderland district health authority and *(c)* England and Wales.

Dr. Mawhinney: The latest available information for 1 October 1991 is shown in the table. Information on general medical practitioners is collected by family health services authority area. Information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Single-handed general medical practitioner list sizes

	Northern RHA	Sunderland (FHSA)	England
Total number of single handed general medical practitioners	129	13	2,923
List size: 1,000 or less	7	0	390
List size 1,000-1,999	57	6	921
List size 2,000-2,999	53	4	1,220
List size: 3,000 or more	12	3	392

Abortion

141. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make a statement on the methods of disposal now being used at private abortion centres; if any recognised abortion centre is still using a macerator; whether she will establish an independent monitoring team to investigate private centres; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will make a statement on the way in which the remains of aborted unborn children are disposed of.

Mr. Sackville: Guidelines have been issued to the NHS and the private abortion sector making it clear that, subject to personal wishes, fetuses and fetal tissue from termination of pregnancy must be incinerated. This is the method now being used by all places approved under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967. Compliance in the NHS is a matter for individual health authorities. The Department's medical, nursing and investigative officers make regular unannounced inspections of approved places and I see no need to change that arrangement.

147. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many unborn children were aborted, during the last 12 months for which figures are available, at *(a)* 10 to 12 weeks, *(b)* 12 to 14 weeks, *(c)* 14 to 16 weeks, *(d)* 16 to 18 weeks, *(e)* 18 to 20 weeks, *(f)* 20 to 22 weeks and *(g)* 22 to 24 weeks gestation.

Mr. Sackville: The figures requested are not readily available in the form requested. The table shows the information that is readily available for England, Wales and Scotland:

Number of abortions by gestation weeks, England, Wales and Scotland. (1 October 1990—30 September 1991)

Gestation weeks	*Number of abortions*
9-12	97,098
13-14	10,577
15-16	6,292
17-18	4,207
19-20	2,803
21-22	1,625
23-24	709

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many unborn children with mental or physical handicaps were aborted after 24 weeks' gestation.

Mr. Sackville: Between 1 April and 30 September 1991, 31 abortions were performed in England, Wales and Scotland after 24 weeks' gestation under statutory ground E which states:

"there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped".

These are the most recent figures available since the changes to the Abortion Act 1967, as amended by section 37 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990, came into effect on 1 April 1991.

Hospital Doctors' Working Hours

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set out her plans for the reduction of junior hospital doctors' hours.

Dr. Mawhinney: The "New Deal" for junior doctors, launched in June 1991, set a time scale for reducing the hours of duty of doctors and dentists in training. Under the "new deal", average weekly contracted hours of duty are to be reduced initially to 83 per week for those working on-call rotas, 72 per week for those working partial shifts and 60 per week for those working full shifts. This was to be done as soon as practicable but, in the light of progress to date, we announced in May that we had set a target date of 1 April 1993 for achieving this.

Average weekly contracted hours of duty are to be reduced further to a maximum of 72 per week for those in hard-pressed on-call posts, 64 per week for those working partial shifts and 56 per week for those working full shifts by 31 December 1994. Regardless of contracted hours, our intention is that no junior doctor employed on a full-time basis should normally be expected to work for more than an average of 56 hours per week by that date.

Subject to review by the ministerial group on junior doctors' hours, the aim is to reduce maximum average contracted hours of duty for on-call posts which are considered not to be hard pressed to 72 per week by the end of 1996. Doctors in higher professional training may still contract for up to 83 hours per week after that date where it would be to the benefit of their training and they wish to do so, providing proper support staffing exists and the duties are not harmful either to the trainees or to patients.

Leeds General Infirmary

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what examination her Department has made of the compliance of the consultancy with the firm Madgenix formerly held by Dr. Ian Barnes at the Leeds general infirmary department of chemical pathology, with her Department's circular HM/62/21; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Allegations concerning this consultancy were the subject of an investigation by the internal auditors of Leeds Western health authority in 1989. An independent consultancy conducted the internal audit. The allegations were not substantiated.

Recent restatements of the allegations by the Management Science and Finance Union have now been referred to the internal auditors by the board of the United Leeds teaching hospitals NHS trust.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action her Department has taken since the statutory auditor's report on the department on chemical pathology at Leeds general infirmary in 1987; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department sought an assurance from Yorkshire regional health authority that the matters contained in the 1987 statutory auditor's report were being addressed. The region reported to the Department in December 1989 that following an internal review, the then Leeds Western health authority had introduced revised procedures for the management of pathology services. The region was satisfied with the district's response to the audit criticisms.

EC Proposals

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the experts her Department consults on European Community proposals relating to health matters.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department consults public sector bodies, professional associations, voluntary organisations and other bodies on EC proposals relating to health matters depending upon the contents of the proposal.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the number of egg-associated food poisoning outbreaks during 1991, listing all the local authorities who have reported such outbreaks to the communicable disease surveillance centre; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The bulk of egg-associated food poisoning outbreaks reported are caused by salmonellas. Outbreaks of human salmonellosis reported to the Public Health Laboratory Service's (PHLS) communicable disease surveillance centre, together with information on suspect foods, are routinely published in the PHLS-SVS

update on salmonella infection. The total number of outbreaks reported in 1991 was 57. Reports of outbreaks are voluntary and are made in confidence to the PHLS. Publication of reports broken down by local authority could damage the continued co-operation of local investigators in providing information relating to outbreaks, which is important for national infectious disease control.

The table gives the information by regional health authority.

Family and general outbreaks of salmonella in which eggs or foods containing eggs were reported as the suspect food England and Wales 1991

Region	*Number of reports*
Northern	4
Yorkshire	5
Trent	6
East Anglia	3
North West Thames	4
North East Thames	2
South East Thames	6
South West Thames	8
Wessex	8
Oxford	1
South Western	2
West Midlands	3
Mersey	0
North Western	2
Wales	2
TOTAL	[1]57

[1] Includes one outbreak reported from the Wessex/Oxford/South Western regional health authority.

Notes:

1. Data provided by the PHLS communicable disease surveillance centre.
2. An outbreak represents two or more related laboratory confirmed salmonella infections in humans of whom at least one was ill.
3. Suspect foods are those reported to communicable disease surveillance centre as such.
4. The total of 57 reports in 1991 includes five not reported in time for inclusion in the January 1992 PHLS-SVS update.

Departmental Environment Policies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who is the Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications of all of her Department's policies; when that person was appointed; what actions her Department has taken since the appointment of a responsible Minister; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment gave him today.

Blood Transfusion Service

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) why screening for human T-cell leukaemia in the blood transfusion service has not been introduced;

(2) if she will publish the conclusions of the study into the risks of the human T-cell leukaemia virus undertaken at the north London blood transfusion centre on behalf of her Department.

Mr. Sackville: The survey by the north London blood transfusion centre into the prevalence of HTLV in its blood donors has recently been concluded and the findings have been presented at a scientific meeting. The results are being considered by an expert advisory committee and recommendations are expected to be presented to Ministers shortly.

General Practitioners

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice she has given regarding *(a)* the ownership of private medical companies by general practitioner fund holders and *(b)* the referral of patients for treatment by such companies by fund holders involved in the companies.

Dr. Mawhinney: Regulation 3(2) of the National Health Service (Fund-holding Practices) (General) Regulations 1991 requires GP fund holders to obtain the written consent of the regional health authority before they are able to use the practice fund to purchase any services from a body with which they have a particular connection. This would include a contract placed with any medical companies in which any member of the fund holding practice had a financial interest, for example, as director or employee. These regulations were issued to all GP fund holders.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance her Department gives to health authorities concerning expenditure by health authorities on newspaper advertisements issued in connection with an authority's proposal to apply for trust status.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. Trust applications are subject to public consultation by regional health authorities, and it is for regions, in consultation with individual trust applicants to decide how best to conduct the consultation and bring it to public notice.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy towards applications for trust status where a hospital trust business plan has as its long-term objective the closure of the hospital concerned.

Dr. Mawhinney: To be successful, each trust must provide the range, volume and quality of services required by its purchasers.

Each trust application is judged against four key criteria: the benefits to patients and improvements in the quality of services it will achieve; leadership and management; the involvement in management of key professional staff; and, financial viability.

Opencast Mining

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will undertake an investigation into the level of respiratory problems of the people in the village of Kirkhamgate, west Yorkshire, brought about in the area by opencast operations;

(2) how many children and adults in the village of Kirkhamgate, west Yorkshire are suffering respiratory problems following the opencast coal mining operations in the area; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Information concerning people with respiratory problems in Kirkhamgate are not collected centrally. The district health authority is not aware of any respiratory problems associated with the small opencast mine nearby.

It is not clear what role current levels of air pollutants may play in the occurrence of respiratory complaints. I am advised, however, that there is no evidence to suggest that surface mineral working causes any detrimental health effects on local communities. Further research needs in the general area of the effects of air pollutants upon health is being considered by the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants which was set up by the Department this year.

Maternity Services

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when her Department ceased to collect centrally information on the place of birth of babies born to women resident in Dacorum and St. Albans districts broken down by hospital in the form indicated in her answer of 15 October 1990, *Official Report*, columns *656-57*.

Mr. Sackville: I regret that the answer given to the hon. Member on 13 January, at column *522*, was incorrect. The information requested in that question is as follows:

	Dacorum	*St. Albans*
St. Albans City Hospital	1,159	1,282
Luton and Dunstable Hospital	21	49
Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, Welwyn Garden City	5	156
Watford General Hospital	210	58
Royal Buckinghamshire Hospital	180	0
RAF Halton Maternity Unit	191	0
Other hospitals	73	60
At home	43	17
Elsewhere	1	1
Total	1,883	1,623

South Birmingham Health Authority

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the KPMG Peat Marwick report into South Birmingham health authority will be available.

Mr. Sackville: We expect the report to be submitted to the regional health authority shortly.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Mink

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice his Department gives to establishments, licensed under the Mink (Keeping) Order 1987, on the avoidance of spread of diseases of mink between establishments and to other wild species.

Mr. Soames: Licensed mink-keeping establishments are visited periodically by the state veterinary service. These visits are primarily concerned with welfare matters, but, when necessary advice is provided on disease.

Sheep Dip

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the scientific advisers to the Veterinary Products Committee who advised on organophosphorous sheep dips, and their employers; what evidence they gave; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: In order to ensure an independent assessment of the dossiers supporting applications, the Veterinary Products Committee supplements its own expertise with advice from officials in the veterinary medicines directorate, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of Health, the Health and Safety Executive and the Department of the Environment. In respect of organophosphorous sheep dips, that advice has also included: an analysis of reports made under the suspected adverse reaction surveillance scheme; the results of an Health and Safety Executive survey of sheep dipping practice in the farming community; and the report of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides into diazinon's use as a pesticide. The committee has recently asked companies to supply further data by the end of the year on studies of farm operators, including blood tests and details of protective clothing worn, as well as studies to show which areas of the bodies of operators are most exposed.

Sheep Scab

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research has been done into the efficacy of different methods for eliminating sheep scab; what are the numbers of infected animals reported in the last five years for which statistics are available; and what comparable eradication schemes operate in other EC countries.

Mr. Gummer: Research is being carried out at the Central Veterinary Laboratory into methods of sheep scab control other than dipping.

Information on the number of infected animals is not available because—as long as the disease remains notifiable—infestation is recorded on a flock basis. In Great Britain, the number of outbreaks of sheep scab by flock in the past five years are as follows:

Year	*Number*
1988	36
1989	66
1990	95
1991	116
1992	[1]93

[1] to 31 May

The Department does not maintain comprehensive information on the control policies in other Community member states. There is no Community requirement for action to control scab.

Nutrition Systems

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much funding is currently allocated by his Department to the encouragement of *(a)* an integrated plant nutrition system, *(b)* the raised efficiency of synthetic fertiliser use and *(c)* the promotion of effective low input systems.

Mr. Curry: In 1992-93, the Department will be spending about £7 million on *(a)* and *(b)* and £6 million on *(c)*. Some £14·8 million will also be spent on the reduction of pesticide usage, which has a major underpinning role in the development of low input systems. The LINK programme "Technologies for Sustainable Farming Systems", introduced in July 1991, is designed to promote collaborative research in the areas

mentioned, and total financial support for that programme will exceed £4 million, of which half will be contributed by the Government.

Animal Slaughtering

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to bring forward legislation which will prohibit the export of live animals for slaughter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: There are no plans to introduce such legislation. New Community rules will come into force on 1 January 1993 to safeguard the welfare of animals during transport. These rules will apply equally to transport within and between member states.

Tobacco

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the present subsidy for tobacco farmers from the common agricultural policy; what proportion of the CAP is allocated to support to tobacco farmers; and what proportion of the subsidised tobacco is exported to third world countries.

Mr. Curry: In 1991, the EC spent 1,300 mecu—about £927 million—on the CAP tobacco regime, which is about 3·9 per cent. of total CAP expenditure. About 18 per cent. of EC raw tobacco production goes to developing countries.

Chernobyl

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list *(a)* the number of farms and *(b)* their acreage that remain under restriction orders in the United Kingdom as a result of the radioactive contamination from the Chernobyl nuclear accident.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is as follows:

	Number of farms	*Acreage (approximate)*
England	138	95,500
Northern Ireland	110	19,850
Scotland	60	145,420
Wales	407	205,500

Conservation Projects

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with representatives of the agricultural industry with regard to future assistance for conservation projects undertaken by farmers.

Mr. Soames: My ministerial colleagues and I have frequent meetings with representatives of the industry about a wide range of issues, including future assistance for conservation projects underaken by farmers.

EC Proposals

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the experts his Department consults on European Community proposals relating to agricultural matters.

Mr. Curry: My Department consults a very wide range of organisations on European Community proposals.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many tests he has carried out on milk for the presence of the organism causing BSE in the last three years; what was the outcome of the tests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Milk has never been shown to transmit any of the spongiform encephalopathies or to contain the infective agent.

Nevertheless, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food funded work starting in 1988 at the Royal Veterinary College, London to determine whether infectivity exists in milk, mammary gland—udder—or supramammary lymph node of four cows with confirmed BSE. No infectivity was found.

A second experiment has been initiated in which susceptible mice will be fed milk from six confirmed cases of BSE—two each at early, mid and late lactation. The results will be published in the normal way when the experiment is complete.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his Ministry's progress in developing a blood test for BSE; and when he expects that such a test might be available for use.

Mr. Gummer: Studies are still under way to develop a satisfactory diagnostic test to detect the BSE agent in the live animal. It is not possible to forecast when such a test might be available, or even to be sure that a blood test will necessarily be the best method of detection. The hon. Member can rest assured that I shall announce any change in the position without delay.

Flood Risks

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what study his Department has made of the flood risks posed by sea level rises in the future to *(a)* the nuclear power station sites in Suffolk and *(b)* the former toxic waste tip near Pakerfield, Suffolk; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has produced estimates of possible sea level rise on a global basis, amounting to about 20 cm by the year 2030 and 65 cm by 2100, but it is not yet possible to assess with precision likely sea level rise in particular localities. Based on this and other information, the Department has issued guidance to the National Rivers Authority and maritime district councils about allowances to be made for sea level rise and crustal movement in designing coastal defences. For the Anglian region, the recommended allowance is 6 mm a year. Although no specific studies have been made of the sites referred to by the hon. Member, it is not thought that either site will be affected by sea level rise.

Departmental Policies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who is the Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications of all of his Department's policies; when that person was appointed; what actions his Department has taken since the appointment of a responsible Minister; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given today by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

State Veterinary Service

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of state veterinary service staff in each year since 1985.

Mr. Soames: Since 1985, the structure of the state veterinary service has changed several times. For example, the Central Veterinary Laboratory, which formed part of the state veterinary service attained agency status in April 1990. In order to allow direct comparisons, the figures provided relate to veterinary, technical and scientific staff in headquarters, the field and investigation services only.

As at 1 January 1985—Figures not readily available.
As at 1 January 1986—Total 768
As at 1 January 1987—Total 689
As at 1 January 1988—Total 711·5
As at 1 January 1989—Total 707·5
As at 1 January 1990—Total 767
As at 1 January 1991—Total 800·5
As at 1 January 1992—Total 798

Shellfish Farming

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what sum of money has been made available by his Department to meet costs of hygiene testing at or near shellfish farming sites in pursuance of EC directive 492.

Mr. Sackville: I have been asked to reply.

The Department has made funds available in 1991-92 and 1992-93 to assist with the initial classification of shellfish harvesting areas in England and Wales required by this directive.

Funds have been allocated to the Public Health Laboratory Service to enable additional microbiological examinations of shellfish to be made without charge to local authorities. The Department has also offered assistance, to local authorities that request it, with the costs of collection of shellfish samples, contributing to such costs as boat hire and transport of samples. Local authorities are expected to meet their own manpower costs.

In the last two financial quarters—January to June 1992—total funding under these two schemes has amounted to £222,500. The Department will shortly be inviting bids from local authorities for the next quarter.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current position on the United Kingdom nuclear weapons at sea policy.

Mr. Rifkind: The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation confirmed last autumn that the sub-strategic nuclear capability remains essential to provide the link between conventional and strategic forces, but that significant reductions in sub-strategic nuclear forces were now possible. In addition to the reductions announced last autumn, the alliance has decided to terminate the deployment of US nuclear depth bombs on NATO maritime patrol aircraft.

The Government are committed to maintaining the United Kindom's nuclear arsenal at the minimum level necessary for our deterrent needs. My predecessor announced last Septemberr that tactical nuclear weapons would no longer be deployed on Royal Navy ships in normal circumstances. The Government have now decided that this residual capability is no longer needed. Royal Navy ships and aircraft and Royal Air Force maritime patrol aircraft will therefore no longer have the capability to deploy tactical nuclear weapons. The United Kingdom weapons previously earmarked for this role will be destroyed. The United Kingdom's sub-strategic nuclear capability will therefore consist of Royal Air Force dual-capable aircraft with the WE177 free-fall bomb.

Research Establishment, Dundrennan

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what complaints he has received about misuse of public property and personnel at the royal armament research development establishment, Dundrennan; what action he has taken; what has been the outcome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: A number of allegations were made in August last year by a Transport and General Workers Union representative concerning misuse of official property and labour at the Kirkcudbright range. The allegations were investigated by the Ministry of Defence police who concluded that there were no grounds for proceeding with criminal charges against the individuals concerned. It was evident, however, that there were a number of management deficiencies that should be rectified. Action has been taken to ensure that such deficiencies will not recur.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent staff changes there have been at the royal armament research development establishment, Dundrennan; what has been the reason for the change in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Since 1 April 1992 two MoD industrial grade staff have retired on medical grounds. As part of the current MoD staff reduction exercise these staff were not replaced. Changes in the contractors' staff are a matter for the contractor.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the ownership, management and staffing arrangements at the royal armament research development establishment at Dundrennan.

Mr. Aitken: The royal armament research development establishment at Dundrennan was transferred from the Defence Research Agency on 1 April 1992 to the directorate general of test and evaluation as part of the directorate of research facilities and ranges. It is therefore now an MOD establishment. The facility employs contractors for much of the work and the staff is therefore made up of both MoD and contractors' staff.

RAF Review

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the names of the personnel who have prepared options for the review of the structure of RAF MOD establishments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to name officials in these circumstances. The options reflect wide consultation throughout the Air Force, the Office of Management and Budget, civilian personnel management and the Defence Works Services Organisation. The consultative document published on 4 June indicates the officials to whom comments and observations are to be directed.

Political Literature

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how literature from the political parties promoting candidates at a general election is made available to serving members of the armed forces; whether canvassing on military installations is encouraged together with the distribution of unsolicited leaflets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Queen's regulations prohibit the distribution of literature about the programmes or policies of political parties through service channels. Where there is normal access direct from the public highway canvassers may visit married quarters and families' hostels. Where access is by service roads and there is no separate entrance, access to accommodation will be at the discretion of the commanding officer.

Defence Exhibition, Chile

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what help was given by the United Kingdom armed forces to British companies taking part in FIDAE 92 aerospace and defence exhibition in Chile in March.

Mr. Aitken: At the invitation of the Chilean air force, eight RAF aircraft were present at FIDAE 92. The RAF also co-hosted a reception.

Military Equipment (Promotion)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates and places to be visited by HMS Invincible and the other Royal Navy ships taking part in the promotional tour for British military equipment; what the cost of the tour is; and whether all costs are being paid by his Department.

Mr. Aitken: HMS Invincible, escorted by HMS Newcastle, HMS Norfolk, HMS Boxer and two Royal Fleet Auxiliaries, is currently undertaking a six-month operational deployment to the far east, known as Orient '92. Although appropriate opportunities will be taken to help promote British defence exports, this is not the primary purpose of the deployment. Orient '92 is intended to demonstrate the continuing ability of the Royal Navy to operate in strength outside the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation area. It will provide the Royal Navy with valuable opportunities to practice operating as a task group in relatively unfamiliar environments, and to take part in bilateral and multilateral exercises with friendly navies. Ships from the task group have already visited Greece and Egypt. Further planned visits are as follows:

	Month
Kenya	June
Seychelles	June
Mauritius	June
Diego Garcia	June, October
Singapore	July, August, September
Malaysia	July, August, September
Hong Kong	July, August, September
Republic of Korea	July, August
Japan	July, August
Indonesia	July, September
Brunei	August
Thailand	September
Philippines	September
Australia	September, October
Oman	October
Bahrain	October
United Arab Emirates	October
Qatar	October
Egypt	November

The ships would, of course, have undertaken other tasks had they not been participating in Orient '92. It is therefore difficult to disaggregate the additional costs of the deployment. However, we expect them to be in the order of £4 million. All of these costs are being met by my Department.

Operation Gladio

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on the public disclosure of information on the activities of and United Kingdom support for Operation Gladio since its inception.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It has been the policy of successive Governments not to comment on matters of this nature. This remains the policy.

Departmental Environment Policies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who is the Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications of all of his Department's policies; when that person was appointed; what actions his Department has taken since the appointment of a responsible Minister; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: In accordance with the Government's policy set out in the White Paper "This Common Inheritance" (Cm 1200), my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence is the nominated Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications of the Department's policies and programmes. My noble Friend assumed this responsibility in April.

Since the appointment of a nominated Minister responsible for environmental matters in September 1990, a network of environment committees has been established within my Department and the three services. The senior committee is the defence environment committee chaired by my noble Friend. The MOD environment manual, which gives practical advice on a wide range of environmental issues, was published in 1991 and has been distributed throughout my Department. At present, the MOD is carrying out a comprehensive environmental review of its activities in order to assess its performance on environmental matters. Further information and details of specific initiatives are contained in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1991 (Vol. 1, Ch. 5).

Hospitals

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by county and region his Department's hospitals in the United Kingdom which had consultant obstetric or general practitioner maternity beds in 1990-91, and give the number of beds of each type in each hospital.

Mr. Aitken: The information requested is as follows:

Service hospital	*County*	*Regional Health Authority*	*Number of beds*[1]
Cambridge military hospital, Aldershot	Hampshire	South West	58
Princess of Wales[2]	Cambridgeshire	East Anglia	[3]22
RAF hospital, Ely			[4]7
Princess Alexandra RAF hospital, Wroughton	Wiltshire	Wessex	16
Princess Mary's RAF hospital, Halton	Buckinghamshire	Oxford	10

[1] Only obstetric maternity beds are to be found in service hospitals.
[2] Obstetric unit closed in March 1991.
[3] January-October 1990.
[4] November 1990—February 1991.

Acoustic Net Pinger

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his plans for the development of an acoustic net pinger to assist submarines in locating the presence of fishing nets.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A contract is shortly to be placed with Graseby Dynamics Ltd. of Bushey, Hertfordshire for the supply of 100 acoustic net pingers. These pingers will be used in an extended sea trial to assess their effectiveness in a working environment. It is planned that the trial, which will be carried out in the Clyde submarine exercise areas in conjunction with the Clyde Fishermens Association, will begin in early 1993 and last for about 18 months. This contract follows the completion of a technical specification by the maritime division of the Defence Research Agency for which competitive tenders were sought.

EC Proposals

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the experts his Department consults on European Community proposals relating to defence matters.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Defence does not come within the ambit of the European Community. It does not therefore make proposals relating to defence matters.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 16 June 1992

HOME DEPARTMENT

Dartmoor Prison

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the practicability of developing HM prison Dartmoor as a community prison, or as a national resource for prisoners with special needs; and if he will make a statement about the future of the prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Dartmoor is too large to become a community prison in the way HM chief inspector of prisons has recommended. However, as the only category B prison in the south-west of England, it fulfils the needs of those prisoners from that part of the country requiring that level of security. The sex offender unit provides a national resource as an integral part of the recent initiative concerned with such prisoners. It incorporates both the assessment and treatment of sex offenders and will continue to develop as part of the national programme.

Major refurbishment is under way at a cost of £25 million and substantial efforts are being made to develop a positive regime for inmates, an example of which is the new intensive therapy unit.

It is the Government's intention that Dartmoor will continue to provide secure accommodation for category B prisoners in the region.

Police Numbers

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the criteria for assessing areas of urban population in calculating police manpower figures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We shall be reviewing the allocation formula used for approving increases in police force establishments later this year in order to take account of the 1991 census data. Part of this review will involve a close scrutiny of the definition of urban areas used in the formula.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further plans he has to stop the use of animals for testing cosmetics.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government have discussed with industry how best to eliminate the testing of cosmetics on animals without putting the public at risk. There has been some progress made in developing alternatives to skin and eye irritancy tests. The Government have called on the European Community to set 1998 as the target date for the replacement of all skin and eye irritancy tests, subject to there being validated non-animal alternatives.

The Government will continue to support work carried out by charitable bodies, academic institutions and industry to develop alternatives to animal testing.

Security Service

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the report to him by the Security Service Commissioner, pursuant to paragraph 7(3) of schedule 1 to the Security Service Act 1989 relating to retention of records.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. It would not be in the interests of national security to do so.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether records compiled by the Security Service kept in temporary files for which a permanent file is not subsequently set up are destroyed within three years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 22 to 24 of the Security Service Commissioner's annual report for 1991 where he describes the Security Service's policy in relation to temporary records which are not converted into permanent files. Except where no inquiries have been made since the Security Service Act 1989 came into force, such temporary records are now retained so that they can be investigated, if necessary, by the complaints tribunal. The commissioner agreed that this policy was correct in law.

Road Accidents

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of civilian fatalities were caused by road traffic accidents involving stolen motor vehicles in the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The information is not available centrally.

Commission for Racial Equality

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for assistance under section 66 of the Race Relations Act 1976 the Commission for Racial Equality has received during the past 12 months; how many applications it supported by providing legal representation during that period; and from how many applicants for whom it initially provided legal representation it later withdrew legal support or funding before the case went to industrial tribunal or county court.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested for the year 1991 is as follows. The number of applications received for assistance under section 66 of the Race Relations Act 1976 received by the Commission for Racial Equality was 1,655.

The number of applications for which the commission's complaints committee agreed to provide legal representation was 388.

The number of applicants for whom the Commission for Racial Equality initially provided legal representation, but from whom on review it later withdrew legal support or funding before the case went to industrial tribunal or county court or was otherwise settled or withdrawn by the complainant was 24.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applicants who received legal representation provided through the Commission for Racial Equality or its funded solicitors were represented at tribunals or county courts in the last 12 months.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of applicants represented at tribunals or county courts who received legal representation through the CRE in 1991 was 54.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his response to the Morgan report on safer communities from the standing conference of crime prevention; and what action he proposes to implement any of the recommendations.

Mr. Jack: The recommendations in the Morgan report ranged wider than had been expected under the working group's terms of reference.

The consideration of the report is now being undertaken but it is taking longer than anticipated because of the additional material to be evaluated. I hope to be able to make an announcement in the near future.

Firearms

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offences have been committed with stolen shotguns in each police force area in each year from 1985.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* shotguns, *(b)* firearms and *(c)* rounds of ammunition have been yielded as a result of each gun amnesty declared since 1962.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is given in the table.

Year of amnesty	*Shotguns*	*Firearms*	*Rounds of ammunition*
1965	2,761	37,739	1,694,000
1968	9,400	15,688	795,000
1988	11,254	31,471	1,511,000

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many thefts of shotguns there have been in each police force area in each year from 1985 *(a)* from domestic premises and *(b)* from all premises.

Mr. Jack: The number of notifiable offences in which shotguns were reported to have been stolen from *(a)* domestic premises and *(b)* all premises, in each police force area in each year from 1985 to 1990 are given in the tables.

Notifiable offences of burglary and theft in which shot guns were stolen (a) from domestic premises
England and Wales — *Number of offences*

Police force area	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Avon and Somerset	9	21	16	18	5	15
Bedfordshire	8	8	6	2	4	12
Cambridgeshire	11	13	9	6	—	4
Cheshire	12	11	7	4	7	6
Cleveland	—	1	1	1	2	3
Cumbria	2	2	8	4	3	6
Derbyshire	2	12	7	6	6	3
Devon and Cornwall	11	12	11	22	14	22
Dorset	4	4	4	4	2	1
Durham	5	16	13	5	6	4
Essex	19	23	31	11	20	16
Gloucestershire	6	3	3	2	2	3
Greater Manchester	2	1	6	2	1	—
Hampshire	21	20	16	21	21	14
Hertfordshire	12	3	8	3	7	2
Humberside	6	12	16	6	4	8
Kent	35	35	49	43	30	38
Lancashire	16	25	18	26	12	9
Leicestershire	9	8	6	7	9	6
Lincolnshire	7	10	9	9	8	4
London, City of	—	1	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	9	10	8	5	9	4
Metropolitan	44	32	33	21	25	14
Norfolk	14	21	26	14	16	18
Northamptonshire	6	10	13	6	2	8
Northumbria	17	17	9	11	15	16
North Yorkshire	16	22	18	10	5	8
Nottinghamshire	1	2	5	6	2	3
South Yorkshire	15	7	9	13	8	9
Staffordshire	8	7	2	7	1	1
Suffolk	15	8	8	14	3	8
Surrey	11	16	12	16	6	14
Sussex	9	10	9	18	9	8
Thames Valley	16	43	35	23	15	20
Warwickshire	13	10	12	3	4	3
West Mercia	19	13	14	9	8	1
West Midlands	23	21	9	8	5	8
West Yorkshire	14	15	13	5	11	9
Wiltshire	2	5	3	1	3	1
Dyfed-Powys	12	8	6	3	2	2
Gwent	2	5	5	2	5	3
North Wales	6	11	10	7	6	3
South Wales	6	3	—	2	1	1

Police force area	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
England and Wales	475	537	503	406	324	338

(b) from all premises

England and Wales — *Number of offences*

Police force area	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Avon and Somerset	14	30	26	25	10	22
Bedfordshire	8	11	10	3	6	14
Cambridgeshire	20	22	14	10	1	5
Cheshire	22	13	10	4	10	7
Cleveland	—	1	2	1	4	3
Cumbria	3	2	10	4	3	11
Derbyshire	9	17	10	8	10	3
Devon and Cornwall	18	25	19	32	25	29
Dorset	6	5	6	4	3	1
Durham	5	18	18	7	12	5
Essex	27	34	39	22	28	26
Gloucestershire	9	8	10	8	5	4
Greater Manchester	6	4	9	7	2	2
Hampshire	26	37	24	29	32	23
Hertfordshire	15	6	12	6	12	5
Humberside	12	17	20	12	9	11
Kent	53	50	61	59	40	47
Lancashire	20	30	21	30	21	13
Leicestershire	15	14	13	12	12	10
Lincolnshire	13	13	16	15	11	7
London, City of	—	1	1	1	—	—
Merseyside	13	13	10	7	11	7
Metropolitan	67	48	45	27	36	19
Norfolk	26	34	37	22	20	22
Northamptonshire	12	19	16	9	4	10
Northumbria	20	27	13	16	18	20
North Yorkshire	16	27	22	16	8	11
Nottinghamshire	6	8	8	10	2	7
South Yorkshire	22	12	13	15	10	14
Staffordshire	9	11	5	7	1	2
Suffolk	23	16	15	15	7	12
Surrey	14	21	20	23	17	18
Sussex	12	19	16	26	11	15
Thames Valley	32	56	43	27	26	22
Warwickshire	22	11	19	6	8	5
West Mercia	28	23	23	11	10	7
West Midlands	31	31	12	11	7	14
West Yorkshire	20	24	17	10	16	11
Wiltshire	3	7	5	4	3	1
Dyfed-Powys	22	12	12	5	5	3
Gwent	2	5	6	2	9	4
North Wales	9	13	14	8	9	5
South Wales	12	9	—	2	1	1
England and Wales	722	804	722	578	495	478

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider declaring a firearms amnesty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There are no plans at present to declare a firearms amnesty. The last one was held in 1988 in conjunction with the introduction of major new legislation on firearms. We would not wish to encourage people to think that if they hold weapons illegally or use them for criminal purposes, they will be given regular opportunities to dispose of them without the risk of prosecution.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the number of *(a)* shotguns and *(b)* other firearms held in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Estimates of the number of shotguns and firearms held on licence in England and Wales at the end of 1990 were published in Home Office statistical bulletin 23/91—paragraphs 3 and 7. A copy of this bulletin is in the Library.

The information for Scotland and Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the relevant Secretary of State.

Condoms

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in what circumstances condoms are issued to prisoners on release from *(a)* women's and *(b)* men's prisons;

(2) if he will make it his policy to offer condoms to all prisoners on their release from prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Procedural guidelines issued to prison governors in November 1991 advised that the period leading up to release is an important time for educational measures and for individual counselling of HIV-infected

prisoners and others with lifestyles which suggest that they may themselves be at risk or that they may be a risk to other people. The guidelines also recommended that governors consider introducing schemes under which all prisoners released—and perhaps those going on home leave—have discrete access to a small supply of free condoms. Several establishments—including at least one for women—operate such schemes. We are reviewing prisons HIV/AIDS policy generally, including policy on the issue of condoms.

West Yorkshire Police Force

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been *(a)* the total funding and *(b)* the established number of full-time officers of the West Yorkshire police force in each of the past five years; and what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding to meet the public demands of this service.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Over the last five years expenditure and the police establishment of the West Yorkshire police have been increased as follows:

Year	*Expenditure £ million*	*Establishment*
1987-88	129·1	5,204
1988-89	149·4	5,227
1989-90	167·0	5,259
1990-91	[1]193·7	5,281
1991-92	[2]218·5	5,295
1992-93	n/a	5,295

[1] Because of change in capital financing arrangements in 1990, some caution should be used in comparing 1990-91 and 1991-92 with earlier years.
[2] Estimated.
n/a = Not available.

The Government are satisfied that the West Yorkshire police authority is able to meet its obligations to provide an efficient police force.

Police Cells

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convicted prisoners were held in places other than prisons for each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The annual averages for convicted prisoners held in police cells, who, but for the lack of available places should otherwise have been in prison custody, for each year since figures have been available are as follows:

	Annual average
1981	0
1982	0
1983	0
1984	0
1985	0
1986	0
1987	0
1988	99
1989	7
1990	213
1991	385

Iraq (Sanctions)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis into the investigations by the Metropolitan police into potential sanctions breaking trade between British and Danish companies and Iraq before, at the time of, or since the Gulf war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Metropolitan police has carried out no investigations into potential sanction-breaking trade between British and Danish companies and Iraq.

The Metropolitan and City police company fraud department was involved in discussions with the Department of Trade and Industry, HM Customs and Excise and others. It was decided that allegations of sanction breaking would be referred to HM Customs and Excise for investigation.

Public Events (Policing)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give a breakdown by constabulary of the amount of money raised in the last financial year by charging for a police presence at sporting, social and other functions and events.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not held centrally, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement outlining his policy on the allocation of funds raised by charging for a police presence at sporting, social and other functions, indicating whether such funds must be allocated to the police budget, or whether they may be used by a local authority for other purposes.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Section 8(1) of the Police Act 1964 requires all receipts of the police authority to be paid into the police fund. It is for the police authority, subject where appropriate to the approval of the county council, to decide how the financial resources available to it should be applied.

Maxwell Pension Funds

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to withdraw passports from British citizens under investigation in connection with the Maxwell pension funds.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Withdrawal of passport facilities would be considered in certain circumstances, for example, where a warrant for arrest has been issued in the United Kingdom or where a person was wanted by the police on suspicion of a serious crime.

The courts also have certain powers to require the surrender of a passport pending trial and in connection with certain civil actions.

Bail

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to ensure that bail is not available to those previously convicted of rape if they are brought before a court on a subsequent charge of a crime involving violence.

Mr. Jack: At present we have no plans to introduce legislation for this purpose. The Bail Act 1976, as amended by the Criminal Justice Act 1988, already makes special provision for cases in which a defendant is accused of murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, rape or attempted rape. It requires a court which grants bail to such a defendant in the face of prosecution objections to give its reasons for so doing. This provision is intended to ensure that the court addresses the issue fully.

PRIME MINISTER

Street Children, Brazil

Mr. Alton: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement about his meeting with Mr. Paulo Melo, the president of the Brazilian parliamentary commission inquiring into the killing of South American street children; what representations he made to the Brazilian authorities about the killings and sale of Brazilian children into sex slavery; and if he will take diplomatic and economic measures against Brazil until the Brazilian authorities bring the perpetrators to justice.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to my statement on 15 June 1992, c *Official Report*, columns 649-64.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 June.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Argentina (Aircraft Sales)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his representations in Washington about the sale of United States A4s to Argentina.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 12 June 1992]:* We are in close touch with the United States Government on the question of arms sales to Argentina. The United States Government understand our concerns about arms sales which might affect our security interests in the Falkland Islands as do our other allies.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister what has been the level of expenditure in each of the last 10 years on the civil list; how the rate of change annually has compared with the annual changes in the retail prices index; and what payments have been made and to whom in each of these years.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* I have been asked to reply.

The information on expenditure for the period 1983 to 1990 is contained in the report of the royal trustees laid before the House of Commons on 15 October 1990 (HC629). As the report explains, the pre-1991 system required voted supplements to be paid annually to the standing services on the Consolidated Fund. It was thought more consistent with the dignity of the Crown and better financial practice to replace that system from 1 January 1991 with a payment fixed at £7·9 million a year for 10 years to cover Her Majesty's statutory expenses; the arrangements enable any surplus in the early years to be accumulated to meet any subsequent deficit. During the same period, the increase in the retail price, index averaged 5·8 per cent. a year.

ENVIRONMENT

Aquatic Environment

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the responsibilities and duties of his Department and any agency which reports to his Department in relation to inshore waters, intertidal areas and maritime land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the Government's memorandum on this subject which was submitted to the Environment Committee of this House in the previous Session. It has now been published by HMSO as part of the Environment Committee's report on coastal zone protection and planning, volume II, minutes of evidence and appendices.

Orimulsion

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration his Department has given to the environmental implications of the disposal of the ash residue from burning orimulsion at power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Applications have been made to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to burn orimulsion at four power stations. None of these has been determined. In determining these applications, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will consider the environmental implications of all releases from the process to all three media: air, water and land. Ash produced by burning orimulsion is classed as a release to land.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the total amount of local authority capital receipts set aside which have not as yet been applied to debt redemption.

Mr. Baldry: Local authority returns indicate that their stock of unapplied capital receipts set aside as provision for credit liabilities at 31 March 1991 was £5·1 billion. It is estimated that at the same date local authorities' outstanding debt stood at around £47 billion.

Fuel Efficiency

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to set minimum standards for fuel use efficiency.

Mr. Maclean: It is already the Government's policy to press for agreement in the European Community on

minimum efficiency standards for a wide range of equipment. A directive setting minimum standards of energy efficiency for gas and oil-fired boilers has already been adopted.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to set standards for acceptable loss of energy or fuel in distribution, and to ensure that losses above test standard be charged against the profits of the industry.

Mr. Maclean: No. We have created a competitive environment for fuel suppliers and it is in their own interest to reduce losses in transmission.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to set standards of fuel use efficiency for the energy-generating industry.

Mr. Maclean: No. We have created a competitive environment for energy generators such that it is in their own interest to use fuel more efficiently. An indication of this is the electricity industry's plans for new electricity generating stations of considerably higher efficiency.

Combined Heat and Power

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being undertaken by his Department to promote the co-generation of heat and power.

Mr. Maclean: The Government fully recognise the environmental and energy efficiency benefits of combined heat and power—co-generation—and seek to ensure that CHP faces no unnecessary legislative or institutional barriers to its implementation. The Energy Efficiency Office—EEO—of the Department, in conjunction with technical staff at energy technology support unit and building research energy conservation support unit, is responsible for promoting the wider use of the technology, in cost-effective locations. It manages this through the best practice programme which provides independent and authoritative advice and information on energy use and efficiency in industry and commerce as well as in the public sector and in housing. In addition to the project profiles and publications produced, there is a continuing programme of CHP seminars and site visits.

The EEO also works closely with the Combined Heat and Power Association, the representative body of the CHP industry.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what public information campaigns are currently being undertaken by his Department to promote energy conservation among the general public; and how much funding has been allocated to each information campaign.

Mr. Maclean: The Department is currently running the "Helping the Earth Begins at Home" campaign, launched last November and expected to operate for a minimum of three years. The campaign, which has a budget of at least £10 million, aims to encourage householders to make their homes more energy efficient and thereby help combat global warming.

Carbon Dioxide

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what specific changes will be implemented on energy policy by his Department in the light of the policy to stabilise carbon dioxide emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the replies that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) on 13 May at column *136* and to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) on 15 May at column *237*.

Marine Conservation

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what efforts are currently undertaken by his Department to deal with the conservation and sustainable management of shared seas.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom plays a very active role in the work of the Oslo and Paris conventions, the London dumping convention, the North sea and Irish sea conferences, the International North Sea task force, the Irish Sea co-ordination group, the International Maritime Organisation, the European Community as it bears on maritime matters such as the common fisheries policy, and the small cetaceans agreement under the Bonn convention on migratory species. Most recently, it has participated actively in the drafting of the oceans chapter of Agenda 21 for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and has, jointly with the Republic of Ireland, appointed a scientific co-ordinator for work to review the state of knowledge of the Irish sea.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals to oblige manufacturers to monitor and publish the energy efficiency levels of their processes and the energy costs of their products.

Mr. Maclean: I have no plans to bring forward proposals to oblige manufacturers, either of imported or home produced goods, to publish the energy efficiency levels of their processes or the energy costs of their products. Although gathering meaningful information for comparative purposes is possible and is done in certain processes, for the majority of finished products the complications and cost of obtaining the data outweigh the benefits.

However, my Energy Efficiency Office through its best practice programme publishes energy consumption guides, where these are meaningful, on specific processing steps. The best practice programme also promotes energy efficiency at all steps of manufacture.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the contribution of energy efficiency measures over the next seven years in reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 14 May to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), column *200*.

Community Environmental Programmes

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to issue low interest loans to urban and rural community organisations, small businesses and individuals involved in community environmental action programmes.

Mr. Maclean: The new rural action scheme which we recently announced as part of our action for the countryside package will provide grants in support of a wide range of local environmental initiatives in England at parish level. This is in addition to £4·054 million awarded by the Department for environmental projects through the environmental grant fund and the special grants programme in 1992-1993. We have no plans for low interest loans for environmental programmes.

Environmental Impact Assessments

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action is currently undertaken by his Department to ensure the environmental impact assessments are conducted as early as possible in a project cycle.

Mr. Maclean: Where a project which is the subject of a planning application requires environmental assessment, the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 require the applicant to prepare and submit with the application an environmental statement setting out the applicant's own assessment of the likely environmental effects of the proposed development. This ensures that the environmental information—the applicant's environmental statement and any representations from statutory consultees and the general public—is taken into account in the decision making process.

DOE circular 15/88 and the Department's booklet "Environmental Assessment—A guide to the procedures" advise developers to discuss with the planning authority the scope of the environmental statement before its preparation is begun and to approach statutory consultees and other bodies concerned with environmental issues at an early stage.

Public Information

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to allow public access to environmental impact assessments, environmental audit data and monitoring results and to information about the production, use and disposal of hazardous substances.

Mr. Maclean: It is my Department's policy to continue to work towards the maximum freedom of public access to environmental information, subject to commercial, personal, confidentiality and national security considerations.

Flora, Fauna and Habitats Directive

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action his Department is taking to implement the EC flora, fauna and habitats directive.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom's current nature protection provisions give this country a firm basis for implementation of the directive. We are considering what further provisions are necessary to enable the directive to come fully into force within the two years prescribed.

At the same time the Government's scientific advisers are working on the criteria for site selection as the first step towards compiling the United Kingdom's national list of candidate sites to be considered as sites of Community importance.

Heathrow Terminal

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received copies of the consultation documents published by BAA plc in respect of its wish to build a fifth terminal at Heathrow airport; and if he will make it his policy to call in the intended formal planning application and hold a public inquiry.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. and learned Friend was given notice of BAA plc's consultation proposals for a fifth terminal at Heathrow airport. He is aware that a planning application may be made later in the year for the terminal, associated link roads to the M25 and connecting rail access to central London.

In the absence of any formal application, it would not be right for my right hon. and learned Friend to decide now whether to call in the application for his own decision. He will consider this carefully when any application is made.

Disabled People (Access)

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what controls or incentives, such as might be incorporated into the grant system, his Department offers to the authorities responsible for places of worship to assist them in undertaking the necessary work to make their premises accessible to disabled people.

Mr. Baldry: Part M of the Building Regulations requires reasonable provision to be made for access and facilities for disabled people to and within new and extended places of worship. The provisions are for the benefit of disabled people, including those with impaired sight or hearing. The approved document, which accompanies part M, provides guidance on how the requirements might be satisfied.

Incinerators

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of whether plants and incinerators proposed for London will breach *(a)* World Health Organisation standards and *(b)* EC standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: None. Assessment of the environmental effects of these installations is for the appropriate local planning authority or my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to take into account in their consideration of whether to grant consents and for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to consider before authorising the relevant processes.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will take a strategic look at the location of plants and incinerators in London.

Mr. Maclean: No.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration his Department is giving to the consequences new plants and incinerators in London will have upon rates of respiratory illness in their locality.

Mr. Maclean: None. These are for the appropriate local planning authority or my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to take into account in their consideration of whether to grant consent for the proposals.

Species and Eco-systems

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to establish United Kingdom-wide surveys on species and eco-systems.

Mr. Maclean: Such surveys are carried out by the three country conservation agencies and co-ordinated by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee for the purposes of the quinquennial review of species and the designation of sites of special scientific interest within Great Britain. In Northern Ireland, the Environment Service of the Department of the Environment (NI) carries out similar surveys for site and species protection.

Falconers

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many licences are currently issued to falconers; and what are the terms and conditions of the licences.

Mr. Maclean: To date, no licences have been issued to falconers this year. In 1991, 65 licences were issued in England, Scotland and Wales to fly birds of prey at blackbirds, skylarks, song thrushes, meadow pipits and black-headed gulls.

Licences are subject to conditions restricting them to the period 1 September to 28 February; imposing a limit of 50 on the number of quarry which may be killed; requiring that the bird of prey to which the licence refers is properly ringed and registered; and requiring that a return showing the birds killed be made by 31 March.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the cost of supervision of falconers, including keeper's time, in the New Forest for 1991 and to date for 1992;

(2) how many animals and birds, and of which species, were taken by falconers in the New Forest in 1991 and to date in 1992.

Mr. Maclean: Licences issued to fly birds of prey at quarry do not require falconers to be supervised. No information is available on the costs of any local requirements that may apply in the New Forest.

Falconers' returns show only the total numbers of each bird species killed under licence; no details are available on the areas from which quarry is taken.

Car Boot Sales

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether Her Majesty's Government have any plans to propose legislation relating to regulation of the conduct of car boot sales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Several existing statutory controls are relevant to the regulation of car boot sales. Thus, although the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988—the GDO—gives a general grant of planning permission for the temporary use of land for markets, including car boot sales, for up to 14 days in total in any calendar year, use for more than 14 days requires specific planning permission. A local planning authority may make a direction under article 4 of the GDO which withdraws this general permission and so requires a specific planning application.

The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 enables local authorities to require the market operator and the site occupier to give them not less than one month's notice of a forthcoming market. The notice gives the authority time to make any necessary provision to avoid disturbance.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires local authorities to ensure that their land is kept clear of litter and refuse. Since 1 July 1991 authorities have been able to extend this duty to the owners of land used for markets, if there is a problem of persistent littering, by designating the land concerned a litter control area.

I do not consider that further legislation is needed.

Assured Tenancy Scheme

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new lets have been created as a result of the assured tenancy scheme introduced in the Housing Act 1980.

Mr. Baldry: By 1 April 1988, a total of 6,700 tenancies had been created by the assured tenancy scheme introduced in the Housing Act 1980. No new tenancies could be created under this scheme after 15 January 1989. After that date, new assured tenancies would be of the type introduced by the Housing Act 1988.

Smog

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent initiatives have been taken by his Department to alert the public to the dangers of summertime smog.

Mr. Maclean: On 22 May, my Department published a leaflet entitled "Summertime smog—how to help prevent it". This gives a practical guide on what individuals can do to limit the emissions of air pollutants which cause summertime smog. It also contains details of how to obtain information on the levels of air pollution in the United Kingdom and associated health advice. This is available to the media, on Ceefax, and, since 6 May, on a free telephone line, 0800 556677.

Pollution

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made by his Department in developing an integrated approach to pollution prevention.

Mr. Maclean: Integrated pollution control was introduced by part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and became effective from 1 April 1991. Implementation is being phased in over a five-year period.

Opencast Mining

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the precise terms of reference of his monitoring exercise in respect of the effectiveness of mineral planning guidance 3 in relation to opencast mining; and if he will give the start date and last date of this consultation exercise.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 2 June, at column *377*.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent initiatives have been taken by his Department to raise public knowledge of ozone-depleting substances and actions the public can take to mitigate their unintended release to the atmosphere.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), at column *266*.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent CFCs are still needed by the refrigeration and air conditioning industries in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Following a proposal by the United Kingdom, the European Community decided earlier this year that it should seek to tighten the controls in the Montreal protocol so that CFC production and consumption had to be phased out by the end of 1995, subject to any exemptions for essential uses. We now need to consider whether an earlier phase-out is possible within the community, and whether production for essential uses is likely to be necessary. To assist in this, the Department has commissioned a study by March Consulting Group on CFC use within the United Kingdom refrigeration and air conditioning industry. The study will consider the pattern of CFC used by the industry and the extent to which substitution by other refrigerants is taking place; how the pattern of use is likely to change between now and the end of the century; and the quantities of CFCs that industry will need in that period and the extent to which this can be met from recycled material.

Council House Sales

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will allow Stockport to use the capital receipts it has accumulated through sale of council houses to invest in housing.

Mr. Baldry: An increase in spending financed from local authorities' capital receipts would be an addition to public expenditure in just the same way as an increase financed by credit approvals to permit additional borrowing. However, by placing constraints on spending from receipts, the Government are able to issue a greater amount of credit approvals to those local authorities where housing needs are greatest and where resources can be put to best use.

Housing Authorities

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the top 10 performing housing authorities in each of the past two years; and what position in the rank order is held by Stockport.

Mr. Baldry: The Department has made no ranked assessment of the performance of housing authorities. However, in the context of the housing investment programme allocations published last December, the previous Secretary of State issued a list of 51 authorities judged to be well ahead of the field in comparison with others in their DOE region. Stockport was included in the list for north-west region.

Empty Properties

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Audit Commission benchmark for empty properties; and what is the level of empty properties in Stockport.

Mr. Baldry: The latest discussion by the Audit Commission of options open to local authorities for the better use of their housing stock is contained in the report "Developing Local Authority Housing Strategies", which was published on 28 May. In the report, the commission refers to benchmarks for void turn-around times for local authorities of six weeks in London and three weeks elsewhere. The commission suggests that if long-term voids were held to 1 per cent. of stock nearly all authorities with void intervals within these benchmarks would achieve a void level of less than 2 per cent.

The latest available information on Stockport's empty council dwellings relates to 1 April 1991 and was provided by the council in its 1991 housing investment programme return, a copy of which is in the Library.

Local Authorities (Debts)

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average figure for metropolitan authorities of debt in relation to housing stock; and what is the figure for Stockport.

Mr. Baldry: No information is now collected by the Department on debt relating to housing stock. However, figures published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy suggest that outstanding debt relating to housing at 31 March 1991 was £61 million for Stockport, or £210 per head of population, and £6·2 billion for all metropolitan districts, or around £560 per head.

Council Waiting Lists

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people are on the waiting list for council accommodation in Stockport.

Mr. Baldry: The latest available information on the number of households on the waiting list relates to 1 April 1991 and was provided by Stockport metropolitan district council in its April 1991 housing investment programme return, a copy of which is in the Library.

City Grant, Bradford

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the position of the application by 3D Ltd. for a city grant in connection with the west end scheme in Bradford.

Mr. Squire: My Department received a revised application for City Grant from 3D on 15 October 1991, for a first phase of the west end scheme, comprising offices in Aldermanbury, and a European pavilion with a multi-storey car park. The developer had to be asked to supply additional information and the application is now under appraisal.

Wild Birds

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of licences granted for taking and the numbers of birds so taken from the wild, for each species of avian predator in each year since 1987.

Mr. Maclean: Details of licences issued to take birds of prey from the wild are given in the United Kingdom's annual derogation reports to the European Commission under the terms of the EC directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds. Copies of each report for the years 1987 to 1991 have been placed in the Library of the House.

RECHAR

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when transitional arrangements for RECHAR funding in 1992-93 will be announced.

Mr. Robin Squire: The transitional arrangements for 1992-93 for the provision of public expenditure cover for European regional development fund grants to be received, including those under the European Community's RECHAR initiative, will be announced very soon.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, columns *155-56*, if he will extend the policy of strict control over development proposals for sites of special scientific interest to one of complete protection unless a question of public safety is at stake.

Mr. Maclean: No. I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning on 24 September 1991 announcing additional safeguards for SSSIs which are now incorporated in DOE circular 1/92.

I also refer the hon. Member to the consultation draft of the planning policy guidance note on nature conservation.

I will arrange for these documents to be sent to the hon. Member.

Traffic, Greenwich

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, column *154*, if he will publish figures on the increase in black smoke concentrations in the Greenwich area in recent years.

Mr. Maclean: The annual mean black smoke concentrations measured at the Greenwich site in $\mu g/m^3$ were as follows:

Year	
1985-86	7
1986-87	13
1987-88	11
1988-89	14
1989-90	18
1990-91	20

Waltham Forest HAT

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to agree a corporate plan with the Waltham Forest housing action trust.

Mr. Baldry: A corporate plan has not yet been received from the Waltham Forest housing action trust. It will be agreed as soon as possible after receipt.

Mortgage Repossessions

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on how many home owners threatened with repossession by banks and building societies have been assisted in each London borough in 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Baldry: Figures are not available in the form requested. The Council of Mortgage Lenders estimates that the combined effect of measures taken by the Government and lenders since December 1991 will save some 55,000 repossessions in the United Kingdom this year.

Mineral Planning

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who appoints members of mineral planning authorities; to whom they report; and what are their terms of reference.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* Within the shire counties, London and the metropolitan districts, the members of the mineral planning authorities are not appointed but are elected through the local government elections. In national parks, the Secretary of State appoints one third of the members of the mineral planning authority, the remaining two thirds are appointed by the local authorities involved.

Members of mineral planning authorities would normally report to the chairperson of any committee on which they sit; in national parks they would normally report to the chairman of the board or committee of the park.

There are no fixed terms of reference for mineral planning authorities.

Ferro-Alloys Chimney

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how emission levels from the Ferro-Alloys chimney in Glossop will be monitored by his Department to ensure there is no breaching of the limits laid down by it.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 12 June 1992]:* Emissions from the chimney at Ferro-Alloys, Glossops, will be

monitored continuously using recording instruments. The records will be scrutinised by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Housing, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many private and public sector properties are currently vacant in the city of Liverpool; what incentives he will provide to Liverpool city council to introduce homesteading schemes; what penalties he will impose on private and public sector landlords who fail to let properties; what is the estimated annual rent and community charge lost on empty private and public sector properties *(a)* throughout the United Kingdom and *(b)* in Liverpool; if he will meet leaders of Liverpool city council to discuss a plan of action; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[pursuant to his answer, 3 June 1992, c. 542]:* At 1 April 1991, the number of vacant properties in Liverpool was 5,733 local authority, 843 housing association and 7,908 privately owned.

As far as local authority stock is concerned, the housing subsidy rules penalise those councils that have more than 2 per cent. of their stock empty and reward those who do better. To further encourage best use of housing resources the Department will be introducing a pilot scheme to promote homesteading of local authority stock, linked with the estate action programme. For private homes, we do not believe that property owners should be forced to let accommodation against their will but our policies are geared to creating the conditions to encourage landlords to let their properties.

The estimated rent loss, for 1991-92, on empty public sector properties was over £136 million for England and £6·4 million for Liverpool. There are no figures available for the private sector.

There are no personal community charge losses on empty properties although the council can levy a standard community charge on most unoccupied domestic properties. This can act as an incentive for landlords to find tenants.

My right hon. and learned Friend will be replying shortly to an invitation from Councillor Harry Rimmer, leader of Liverpool city council, to visit the city. The estate action programme and the vacant dwellings initiative and the prospect of a housing action trust are examples of joint initiatives tackling the city's housing problems. In addition, the council's success in round one of city challenge will lead to a major transformation in the city centre with substantial benefits for its residents.

Cash Limits

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any further changes to announce his Department's cash limits for 1992-93.

Mr. Howard *[pursuant to his answer, 4 June 1992, c. 608]:* In addition, subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate the DOE/UA non-voted cash limit will be increased by £159,492,000 from £829,603,000 to £989,095,000. This includes £22,992,000 transferred from the Department of Trade and Industry for inner cities task forces' projects.

It also includes an increase in grant in aid of £49,300,000 to the London Docklands development corporation for the eastern extension of the docklands light railway and capital expenditure relating to the railway.

Also, £81,800,000 is transferred from the Department of Transport to enable the corporation to take over operational responsibilities for the railway.

A net figure of a further £5,400,000 is required for setting up the Birmingham development corporation, progressing the Bristol spine road, supporting the Manchester Olympic bid committee's preparation of the bid for the 2000 Olympics and transferring inner cities research to the Department's housing vote.

All these changes are either claims on the reserve or are offset elsewhere and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Law of the Sea

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what efforts are being made by his Department to bring into force the United Nations convention on the law of the sea.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply.

We are working towards the achievement of a universally acceptable convention. While many of the provisions of this convention are helpful, there are serious objections to part XI, concerning sea-bed mining.

On 16 and 17 June my officials will be participating in informal consultations chaired by the United Nations Secretary-General in order to seek solutions to the problems in part XI.

Disabled People (Access)

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what controls or incentives, such as might be incorporated into the grant system, his Department offers to the managers of sub-post offices to assist them in undertaking the necessary work to make their premises and services accessible for disabled people.

Mr. Leigh: I have been asked to reply.

There is no Government scheme for offering grants to sub-postmasters to assist them in making their premises and services available for the disabled. The provision of premises to an acceptable standard for carrying on Post Office Counters business is a matter for the sub-postmaster, usually at his or her own expense, as laid down in the sub-postmasters' standard contract conditions.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if there have been any items accepted in lieu of tax or allocated since his announcement on 3 June.

Mr. Mellor: Since my announcement on 3 June, *Official Report*, column *570*, I am pleased to inform the House of the acceptance of a further six offers: a painting, "Up and Out" by Richard Hamilton in lieu of £7,000; Hambledon cricket club account book in lieu of £39,120; two paintings, "John Frederick Sackville, 3rd Duke of Dorset" by Sir Joshua Reynolds and "Lady Frances Cranfield" by Sir Anthony Van Dyck in lieu of £404,544; two busts by

Rysbrack in lieu of £418,920; a painting "Lady Charlotte Bonham-Carter" by Peter Greenham in lieu of £8,500; and land known as Nolands farm in lieu of £57,920.

The paintings "Up and Out" and "Lady Charlotte Bonham-Carter" have been allocated to the Tate gallery. The two paintings by Reynolds and Van Dyck "John Frederick Sackville, 3rd Duke of Dorset" and "Lady Frances Cranfield" are to remain at Knole house, and the Rysbrack busts are to remain at Hagley hall. Nolands farm has been allocated to the National Trust. No decision has yet been taken on the allocation of the Hambledon cricket club account book.

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received about the situation within and around the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 12 June 1992]:* I am in close touch with the Arts Council about the situation and shall be seeing the chairman of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society on 16 June.

I am anxious that the current high artistic standing of the Royal Liverpool philharmonic orchestra under its music director, Libor Pesek, should not be jeopardised.

EDUCATION

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list all those functions and areas in his Department and associated agencies that have been identified for market testing in the wake of the White Paper "Competing for Quality".

Mr. Forman: The programme for market testing activities within the Department and the Teachers' Pensions Agency in 1992-93 and later years has yet to be finalised.

School Premises

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will now repeal DES regulation 909; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Department is currently reviewing the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981, SI No. 909, as amended, in conjunction with the Welsh Office. While the review is in progress, the 1981 regulations will remain in force. The results of the review are expected to be available later this year.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his estimate of the consequence of DES regulation 909 so far as the upgrading of school playing fields is concerned.

Mr. Forth: The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981, SI No. 909, introduced new quality and suitability requirements for playing fields in addition to minimum area standards. In the 1986 survey of school buildings, local education authorities reported that 5 per cent. of primary and 6 per cent. of secondary schools in the sample needed resources to bring their playing fields up to the 1981 regulation standards. The national estimate of cost, based on the figures reported, is £60 million at November 1985 prices, or £66 million at first quarter 1992 prices.

The survey did not identify the type of improvements in quality and suitability which may have been required. Some of the deficiencies will have been dealt with since 1986.

Non-vocational Education

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will review the funding arrangements for adult education; and what representations he has received about the future of non-vocational education provision.

Mr. Forman: There is no need for a review. Funding arrangements in 1993-94 will reflect LEAs' changed duties under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. In calculating the transfer of funds from local authorities to the new further education sector, the Government will leave within local authority standard spending the resources attributable to those courses which fall to LEAs' responsibilities.

My right hon. Friend has received a small number of representations about LEA expenditure on the further education of adults.

Further Education Funding Council

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to fund the sixth forms of grant-maintained schools through the Further Education Funding Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Further Education Funding Council will not be responsible for funding sixth-forms of schools.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make his policy to require local education authorities to complete statutory special educational needs assessments within a six-month time period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: On 11 June my noble Friend the Minister of State announced in another place the Government's wide-ranging proposals to legislate on special educational needs. They include regulating the time scales within which assessment procedures must be completed. We shall consult widely on the detail of our proposals.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Environmental Research Programmes

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he received a copy of the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology's report on environmental research programmes; and what responses he intends to make to the report.

Mr. Waldegrave: The report by the Advisory Council on Science and Technology—ACOST—on environmental research programmes was received by the science and technology secretariat of the Cabinet Office in October 1991. The Government response will be sent to ACOST in July, and published in due course.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to make publicly available the background papers supporting the decision to develop the citizens charter; and what requests his Department has received to date for this information.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Citizens Charter policies have been fully set out in Cm 1599 and charters relating to individual services. I have had one request to make available unpublished factual and analytical material on the policy analysis reviews relating to the citizens charter, but the policy analysis review technique has not been used for many years.

Departmental Policies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who is the Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications of all of his Department's policies; when that person was appointed; what actions his Department has taken since the appointment of a responsible Minister; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 15 June, *Official Report*, column *399*.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Tobacco

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Overseas Development Administration's policy towards the sponsoring of agricultural development schemes aimed at enhancing the growing of tobacco crops.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Tobacco is an important crop and a source of export earnings in some developing countries. There is, however, increasing evidence that the health risks associated with tobacco consumption will affect developing countries severely, especially by placing increasing burdens on their health budgets, which in most cases are inadequate to cope.

In these circumstances, it has been Her Majesty's Government's policy since early 1991 that the overseas aid programme should not be used for any purpose which identifiably supports the tobacco sector. Accordingly, no new such bilateral commitments have been undertaken since then. We advocate that multilateral agencies to which we contribute should pursue a similar policy. In addition, we shall continue to help developing countries to reduce their tobacco consumption, and maintain our assistance to farmers dependent on tobacco crops to diversify into alternative activities. The same policy applies to our assistance in eastern Europe and the states of the former Soviet Union.

Know-how Funds

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent projects in eastern Europe funded by the know-how fund have to meet environmental criteria; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The know-how fund is a technical assistance programme and most of its projects are in sectors where environmental impact is limited or non-existent; for example privatisation, management training, accountancy development and the stimulation of small businesses. For those know-how fund projects with environmental aspects, the criteria used are the same as those operated for the rest of the UK aid programme. There is a tranche of the know-how fund that is available specifically to fund environmental projects.

Community Environmental Action

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much is currently allocated by the Overseas Development Administration to assist community environmental action.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Overseas Development Administration does not collate data in the format requested. However, some examples of support for community environmental action are the 124 projects at a cost of about £13 million we fund with non-governmental organisations, and the western Ghats forestry project in southern India, to which we are contributing £25 million, which includes programmes for involving local community groups in the planning and management of the forest.

Aid (Energy Efficiency)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much is currently allocated by the Overseas Development Administration to provide more efficient domestic stoves, household lighting and cooling/refrigeration processes in lower-income countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Overseas Development Administration does not keep records in a form which classifies financial allocations across the aid programme in these categories. Within our allocations for research work £360,000 is committed to examining the more efficient design, production and marketing of domestic stoves.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what level of capital and technical assistance is granted by his Department to lower-income countries to develop training in designing energy efficient systems for use in homes, offices, agriculture and industry.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Overseas Development Administration does not keep records in a form which enables spending to be identified by the categories requested.

Conservation Research

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much is allocated by the Overseas Development Administration to promote taxonomic and systematic conservation research.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Taxonomic studies form integral components of a number of natural resources management and conservation projects but disaggregated figures for taxonomy as such as not available. Examples include the central Amazonia flora and vegetation project in Brazil, a forest inventory and management project in

Ghana, a forest genetics project in Honduras and a plant biodiversity and conservation project in collaboration with the national museums of Kenya.

Human Development Index

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to support the improvement of the human development index prepared by the United Nations Development Programme.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom welcomes the human development index and the annual human development report in which it appears as a useful contribution to the development debate. Significant improvements have been made since its introduction in 1990, particularly in the use of more recent source data. We will continue to support the report team in the United Nations Development Programme in further improving the index.

Ethiopia

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the United Kingdom Government will support the Ethiopian Government's request for aid for their emergency food security reserve.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have told the World Food Programme that it may draw on the 25,000 tonnes we have promised to supply to WFP's regular programme this year in order to meet this request.

Southern Africa

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being taken to ensure that United Kingdom and European Community food aid arrives in southern Africa by the end of June; and what aid is provided for port rehabilitation, transport and management.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Food aid for southern Africa needs to flow steadily over the next few months to use all the transport capacity available, and ensure that the supplies do not arrive in the ports all at once. EC and UN food aid is planned with other donors on this basis. A logistics advice centre has recently been set up by the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference and the World Food Programme in Harare to assist in the co-ordination of food deliveries.

Support for the rehabilitation and development of ports and island transport routes is an important part of United Kingdom development aid to southern Africa, including over £17 million for the development of Maputo port, and £5·47 million for the repair and rehabilitation for Tanga port in Tanzania. Our present assistance for inland transport includes £31·5 million for the rehabilitation of the Limpopo and Nacala railways in Mozambique, £14 million from the northern transport corridor linking southern Malawi with Dar es Salaam, and £1·27 million for the rehabilitation of the Beira corridor railway.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fishing Restrictions

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the administrative costs involved in enforcing the days at sea restrictions contained in the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill.

Mr. Curry: The Bill's explanatory and financial memorandum indicates that the cost of administration and enforcement is provisionally estimated at £0·7 million in 1992-93, £2·3 million in 1993-94 and £1·4 million in 1994-95.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will press for other member states to adopt uniform days at sea regulations in line with those he proposes for the British fishing industry.

Mr. Curry: I confirm that we shall be pressing hard for other member states to reduce their fishing effort as part of their 1993-96 multi-annual guidance programme.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will bring forward amendments to the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill to provide for the effect of bad weather on a fishing vessel's days at sea quota.

Mr. Curry: Days at sea will be allocated to fishing vessels on the basis of their 1991 track records and it will be possible for fishermen to appeal if they think that their record has been depressed by exceptionally bad weather in that year. Once initial allocations have been made, they will not be affected by bad weather in subsequent years.

Fishing Boats (Decommissioning)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what sum the Government contribute as part of the European Community's fishing vessel decommissioning grant; what percentage this figure represents of the overall grant; and what are the contributions of other member states.

Mr. Curry: The decommissioning scheme which my right hon. Friend announced on 27 February is expected to cost £25 million. Council regulation 4028/86, as amended, provides for 50 per cent. of this to be reimbursed by the Community—70 per cent. if vessels are scrapped—but operation of the Community budget means that the greater part of any such reimbursement is funded by the Exchequer.

Set-aside Systems

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to be able to publish full and final details of the new set-aside systems.

Mr. Curry: I hope that draft legal texts implementing the Council agreement will be adopted soon. The Commission must then table implementing regulations. Until these have been discussed and agreed in Brussels, we cannot finalise our own detailed national arrangements but we shall do our utmost to provide authoritative guidance as soon as possible.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with his EC counterparts on measures to ensure that member states implement the new arrangements for set-aside systems.

Mr. Curry: Detailed Commission implementing rules will be discussed by member states once the legal texts implementing the Council's decision have been agreed. EC Agriculture Ministers are also considering proposals for a new, integrated administration and control system for certain aid schemes, including set-aside. If, despite these rules, other member states make payments to producers who have not met the appropriate set-aside requirement, their claims for EC reimbursement of the area payments can be disallowed.

Rabies

Mr. Hague: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements he has made to safeguard Britain's high health standards on protection from rabies.

Mr. Gummer: Agreement was reached in the Agricultural Council on 15 June on the so-called "Balai" directive which lays down trading conditions for species not covered by other Community rules. These include a number of species currently subject to quarantine for rabies on import to the United Kingdom. The measure covers animals that are traded commercially—not pets accompanying travellers.

The agreement includes strict measures to ensure against the possibility of rabies being introduced into this country. Quarantine remains where the risk of importing the disease exists. The only changes relate to cases where there is no such risk and only involve trade between approved operators after 1 January 1994.

Our existing rules do not require quarantine for farm livestock, which, although susceptible to rabies, present no real disease risk. After January 1994, similar rules will apply to animals such as rabbits, born and bred in the holding of origin, which can be imported with the same degree of safety.

We agreed some particularly tough rules to cover cats and dogs within this directive—that is, largely those imported for breeding purposes. If they are born, and have remained, in a single rabies-free premises, have been vaccinated, and the subsequent blood test has proved that vaccination has been effective, they may be exported to the United Kingdom without quarantine. They must also carry microchip identification, full and acceptable veterinary records, and be carried in an approved manner, in a special vehicle, directly from the place of origin to a previously notified destination where further checks may be carried out if necessary. The veterinary advice is clear that this constitutes as effective a safeguard against rabies as the quarantine system.

Our present arrangements, including quarantine, will continue as far as pet animals are concerned. The arrangements agreed for commercially traded animals provide us with at least the same level of security as the existing system. EC Ministers and the Commission unanimously agreed that they would not contemplate changes in arrangements for pets unless these were at least as effective.

This agreement is a further example of the success obtainable by Britain being at the heart of the Community. We have safeguarded the principle of the single market without lessening the protection of our nation from rabies. Also of importance, the Council agreed to continue with rabies eradication programmes on the continent. Some progress has been made already and we know that other countries are determined to succeed. We all look forward to the day when the Community will be rabies free. The outcome recognises the special situation existing in the British isles and fully safeguards this country against the introduction of rabies.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Kilostream

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those areas of the United Kingdom where Kilostream facilities are not available to industry and commerce.

Mr. Leigh: It is a condition of British Telecom's licence that it provides leased circuits throughout its licensed area to meet all reasonable demands.

Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many businesses have borrowed money under the small firms loan guarantee scheme in each of the last five years.

Mr. Leigh: The number of businesses is not available, some businesses having had two or more loans. However, the number of applications under the loan guarantee scheme in each of the last five years has been:

	Number
1987-88	1,222
1988-89	2,266
1989-90	3,204
1990-91	3,393
1991-92	2,950

Power Stations

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the number of power stations in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Northern Ireland and *(d)* England that burn, or propose to burn, orimulsion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Two power stations in England, at Ince in Cheshire and Richborough in Kent have permission under legislation preceding the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to burn limited amounts of orimulsion. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is considering two applications for authorisations in respect of proposals to burn orimulsion at Pembroke power station in Wales and Padiham power station in Lancashire, England. The electricity supply industry in Scotland and Northern Ireland are matters respectively for the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Aerospace

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the number of jobs provided by the British aerospace industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: The latest official figures from the Business Monitor annual census of production is 174,000 in 1990.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the number of jobs likely to be provided in the United Kingdom if the European fighter aircraft goes into full production.

Mr. Sainsbury: Industry estimates vary between about 20,000 to 30,000 jobs provided or safeguarded directly, and a similar number indirectly with the supporting suppliers of goods and services.

LINK

Mr. Hendry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many applications have been received for each category of programme under the LINK scheme; how many of these have been approved in each category; and if he will make a statement on the criteria used in accepting or rejecting an application.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are 30 programmes under the LINK scheme which fit into five broad categories. According to the records maintained by the LINK secretariat, by the end of March 1992 a total of 985 full proposals for projects under LINK programmes had been received, of which 380 had been approved. The table lists the numbers of full proposals and approved projects for each of the categories.

Programme category	*Full proposals*	*Approved projects*
Food and Biosciences	346	106
Engineering	294	103
Sensors and Measurement	155	73
Electronics	127	72
Materials and Chemicals	66	29

It is for each programme management committee to decide on the criteria for accepting or rejecting a project within their programme. However, their criteria will include the scientific quality of the proposal and its industrial relevance, its applicability to the priority areas of the programme and the objectives of the LINK initiative. The programme management committees include a number of industrialists and academics who are experts in the topics covered by a specific programme and advise on the selection of projects.

ICSTIS Trustees Compensation Fund

Mr. Hendry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much money has been collected through the Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services trustees compensation fund; how this money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on how the contribution levels to the compensation fund were established.

Mr. Leigh: The Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services is a self-regulatory body for the premium rate service industry. The compensation funds for chatlines and live conversation services are the responsibility of independent trustees and questions about the funds should be addressed to them.

Footwear

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on progress on the EC regulation seeking to introduce quantitative restrictions on the import of footwear from China.

Mr. Needham: Discussions between member states' officials are continuing in Brussels.

British Nuclear Fuels Limited

Mr. Miller: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last met the chairman of BNFL to discuss the removal of civil service pension arrangements from workers being transferred to Urenco.

Mr. Eggar: I meet the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc from time to time to discuss a range of issues. It is not legally possible for staff transferred from BNFL to another company to remain in the relevant pension schemes. BNFL has made it clear that the new pension arrangements will be established following consultation with staff and trade union representatives and that the benefits of the new arrangements will be broadly equivalent to the current schemes.

Prospectus Issues

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the previous investigations his Department has carried out into prospectus issues in respect of *(a)* listed or quoted companies or companies seeking a listing or quote on the stock exchange for their shares and *(b)* other companies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Inquiries by inspectors appointed under sections 432 and 442 of the Companies Act 1985 to investigate and report on the affairs and/or membership of companies are wide ranging. However, in some such cases, part of the investigation may relate to the circumstances surrounding and documentation relating to the issue or acquisition of shares. For example, of those reports under sections 432 and 442 published since 1 January 1987, the following make significant reference to such matters.

Company Name	*Date of publication*
Aldershot Football Club Ltd.	2 July 1987
Milbury plc	27 October 1988
Westminster Property Group Limited	
County NatWest Limited	20 July 1989
County Natwest Securities Ltd.	
House of Fraser Holdings plc	7 March 1990
Aldermanbury Trust plc	20 March 1991
Sound Diffusion plc	1 May 1991
Rotaprint plc	24 July 1991
The Milford Docks Company	16 January 1992
BOM Holdings plc	27 February 1992

Copies of these reports are available in the Library.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all those functions and areas in his Department and associated agencies that have been identified for market testing in the wake of the White Paper "Competing for Quality".

Mr. Eggar: My Department has not yet finalised its market testing programme. A statement will be made in due course.

Departmental Library

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy on obtaining books, reports and video-cassettes for his departmental library at the request of hon. Members.

Mr. Eggar: My Department purchases the books and other information sources needed to carry out its work. Its library does not provide a service to hon. Members.

Nuclear Materials

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what involvement Her Majesty's Government expect to have in the forthcoming review conference of the convention on the physical protection of nuclear materials.

Mr. Eggar: Given the United Kingdom's degree of expertise on physical protection, which has long been recognised internationally, Her Majesty's Government expect to play an important and constructive role in the forthcoming conference.

Multi-level Marketing

Mr. Rowe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many complaints about multi-level marketing companies were received by his Department in the latest 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 12 June 1992]:* Over the last 12 months we have received more than 500 written queries and possibly twice as many telephone queries on aspects of this subject. Most question the legality of schemes. Pyramid selling and similar selling schemes as specified in the Fair Trading Act 1973 are legal provided they comply with the relevant legislation.

British Footwear Manufacturers Federation

Mr. Trimble: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what dates his Department replied to the faxes from the British Footwear Manufacturers Federation dated 12 and 29 May.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 12 June 1992:]* The fax message sent to my officials on 12 May contained information from the federation and thus called for no immediate reply. As regards the fax message sent to me on 29 May, my officials discussed it with the federation by telephone that day and I replied in writing on 9 June.

Expo 92

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what is the country of origin of the bottled water being served in the English pavilion at Expo '92 in Seville; and how many restaurants and bars there are in the pavilion;

(2) if he will make a statement on the reasons why no English wine is being served in the British pavilion at Expo '92 in Seville;

(3) what is the country of origin of the wine being served in the English pavilion at Expo '92 in Seville; and what quantity of wine is held by each outlet.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* A range of English wines is served in the British pavilion at Expo '92. At present the caterers hold a central stock of more than 50 cases as supplies for the three restaurants and one bar in the British pavilion. These stocks are replenished as required. Also, all the bottled water served in the British pavilion is British.

EC Proposals

Mr. Barnes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the experts his Department consults on European Community proposals relating to trade and industry matters.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* My department undertakes extensive consultation with a range of expert bodies and individuals in respect of European Community proposals. They are too numerous to list.

Military Equipment

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of total visible exports were accounted for by items falling under those tariffs heading which have been identified as covering purely military equipment in *(a)* 1990 and *(b)* 1991.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 15 June 1992:]* Military equipment accounted for 2 per cent. of United Kingdom visible exports in 1991. Information for 1990 is not available.

Note:

1. Military equipment is defined, in terms of the Standard International Trade Classification (Revision 3), as *aircraft and associated equipment* (all tariff headings in division 79 other than those identified as "civil"; and excluding spacecraft and launch vehicles); *warships* (tariff heading 890600 100) and *arms and ammunition for (military purposes)* (division 98).

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether plutonium originating in United Kingdom reactors has been exported to, or imported from foreign countries in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991 and *(c)* the current year to date; and what plans there are for the export and import of plutonium in the remainder of the current year.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* Information about the imports and exports of civil plutonium is included in the plutonium figures published annually. For the 1989-90 and 1990-91 financial years, I refer the hon. Member to the press releases issued by the former Department of Energy and placed in the Library of the House on 18 October 1990 and 17 October 1991 respectively. Similar information will be published later this year in respect of the 1991-92 financial year. Future plans are a commercial matter for the importers and exporters of the plutonium.

Sellafield

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with British Nuclear Fuels plc as to when the company intends to commission the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* The commissioning process is already under way. Radioactive fuel will be progressively introduced into the various sections of the plant starting in late 1992.

Pressure Vessel Integrity Committee

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the names and qualifications of the Pressure Vessel Integrity Committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* The Pressure Vessels Consultative Committee acts as a forum for discussion of relevant national and EC legislation, and is one of the bodies consulted by the Department concerning proposed EC directives in its field. Its present membership is:

PVCC Membership

Name	
Mr. B. J. Darlaston	Berkeley Research Laboratories
Mr. G. Francom	Associated Offices Technical Committee
Mr. M. R. Collyer	Air Products Ltd.
Mr. R. K. Jones	British Standards Institution
Mr. A. Dewar	National Power Ltd.
Mr. D. C. Hoskins	PowerGen plc
Mr. J. N. Ruggles	Cornhill Insurance plc
Dr. K. Walkin	Health and Safety Executive
Dr. A. A. Denton	Noble Denton International Ltd.
Mr. J. L. Bayley	—
Mr. R. Houston	British Gas plc
Mr. J. M. G. Clark	British Standards Institution
Mr. M. Hayter	Department of Trade and Industry
Mr. R. F. R. Towndrow	ICI
Mr. J. A. W. McDonald	Health and Safety Executive
Mr. E. Crooks	Health and Safety Executive
Mr. J. Kimber	Lloyds Register
Mr. J. L. Hardy	Power Generation Contractors Association
Mr. T. V. Lipscomb	NEI International Combustion Ltd.
Mr. R. H. Shipman	LPGITA
Dr. R. Wallace	Eagle Star Insurance Co. Ltd.
Dr. J. R. West	Babcock Energy Ltd.
Mr. M. J. Willerton	Beel Industry Boilers
Mr. A. Morrow	British Steel plc

Coal Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will make public details of all communications he receives from the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission on the safety consequences of coal privatisation.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to the reply, 22 May 1992, c. 332]:* I have today received a letter from Sir John Cullen on the safety implications of the privatisation of the coal industry. Copies of Sir John's letter have been placed in the Library of the House. I welcome the constructive and positive approach the Commission have adopted.

Coal Industry Safety Inspectors

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many coal industry safety inspectors per 1,000 men were employed in each year from 1985 to 1991.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

Available estimates of the number of Health and Safety Executive district mines inspectors per 1,000 employees in coal mining are:

	Number
1985-86	0·30
1986-87	0·35
1987-88	0·40
1988-89	0·42
1989-90	0·43
1990-91	0·41

WALES

Council Sales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the amount of receipts realised by each county council in Wales from the sales of buildings and land and the amount of receipts currently retained; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The information available, which includes receipts from the sale of land, buildings, vehicles and other equipment, is given in the table:

£000

	Receipts from the sale of fixed assets[1]	*Unredeemed set aside receipts*[2]
Clwyd	17,955	6,586
Dyfed	4,851	296
Gwent	15,948	1,296
Gwynedd	1,975	2
Mid Glamorgan	5,759	545
Powys	2,571	200
South Glamorgan	37,895	1,255
West Glamorgan	5,021	0
Total counties[3]	91,975	10,180

[1] Capital receipts in the period 1986-87 to 1990-91 inclusive. Information relating to earlier years is not readily available.
[2] Reserved part of capital receipts, set aside but not yet redeemed, at 31 March 1991.
[3] Excluding joint police authorities.

Council House Sales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the amount of cash realised from the sale of council houses in each of the district and borough councils in Wales giving the numbers of houses sold in each location and indicating the current amount of receipts retained by each local authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Information relating to numbers of houses sold is given in the table. Regarding receipts from council house sales, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Monmouth on 4 February 1992. For receipts set aside and not yet redeemed, the latest available information is that included in the reply given to the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) on 22 January 1992.

Council houses sold 1981-82 to 1990-91 inclusive

	Number
Alyn and Deeside	1,484
Colwyn	801
Delyn	1,355

	Number
Glyndwr	1,255
Rhuddlan	919
Wrexham Maelor	3,547
Carmarthen	1,192
Ceredigion	1,421
Dinefwr	892
Llanelli	3,350
Preseli Pembroke	2,277
South Pembrokeshire	879
Blaenau Gwent	2,363
Islwyn	3,675
Monmouth	1,878
Newport	4,050
Torfaen	3,723
Aberconwy	1,724
Arfon	1,382
Dwyfor	392
Meirionnydd	897
Ynys Mon	1,654
Cynon Valley	1,503
Merthyr Tydfil	2,276
Ogwr	4,609
Rhondda	751
Rhymney Valley	3,712
Taff Ely	3,900
Brecknock	1,444
Montgomeryshire	1,350
Radnorshire	573
Cardiff	7,663
Vale of Glamorgan	2,827
Port Talbot	3,486
Lliw Valley	1,916
Neath	2,427
Swansea	4,068
TOTAL	83,615

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, column *119*, what information he has on the election of chairmen or women by the training and enterprise councils in Wales; on what dates they were each elected; for what period they were elected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The following information is provided in respect of TEC chairmen in Wales:

TEC	*Chairman*	*In post from*
North West Wales	Mr. T. Jones	March 1990[1]
North East Wales	Mr. J. Troth	November 1989[1]
Powys	Mr. D. Margetts	April 1990[1]
Mid Glamorgan	Mr. J. Phillips	September 1989[1]
Gwent	Mr. L. Quinn	March 1990[1] to October 1990
	Mr. G. Canning	October 1990
South Glamorgan	Mr. R. Helliwell	January 1990[1] to March 1992
	Mr. E. Crawford	April 1992
West Wales	Mr. P. Allen	November 1989[1] to July 1990
	Mr. R. Hastie	July 1990

[1] Commencement of TEC development phase.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, column *119*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the eligibility criteria for the chairmen of training and enterprise councils in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The eligibility criteria for the TEC directors and chairmen are laid out in paras 6.3 and 6.4 of the TEC operating agreement 1992-93, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of Cardiff Bay development corporation concerning the rise in the cost of construction of the proposed Cardiff bay barrage since November 1990; to what extent such an increase is attributable to *(a)* inflation and *(b)* design changes; for *(b)* if he will give details; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have regular discussions with the chairman of Cardiff Bay development corporation about a range of issues, as do my officials and officers of the corporation.

In November 1990 the development corporation issued and EC prequalification notice which showed the estimated cost of construction of the proposed Cardiff bay barrage as £86 million at November 1988 prices. No recosting exercise was undertaken for the purposes of the prequalification notice since it was intended to be purely indicative for companies with an interest in tendering formally at a later stage. The equivalent figure in the prequalification notice issued this month was £112 million at 1991-92 prices.

Of the change, £7·9 million is attributable to design changes and the remainder to inflation and roundings in the November 1988 price figure.

The main details of the design changes were:

(i) outer harbour dredging;
(ii) additional fish pass requirements;
(iii) change to the way in which the barrage meets land at Queen Alexandra dock;
(iv) change of embankment cross section;
(v) amendments to the design and size of the then proposed feeding ground at Wentloog lagoon.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will extend his policy of strict control over development proposals for sites of special scientific interest to one of complete protection unless there is a question of public safety at stake.

Mr. David Hunt: The revised arrangements published in Welsh Office circular 1/92 should ensure that nature conservation interests are adequately protected in the consideration of applications for planning permission. I have no proposals to extend them.

Parc Slip Opencast Site

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to publish his inspector's report on the public inquiry held last July into the British Coal opencast executive's application to extend the Parc Slip opencast site at Cefn Cribwr towards Kenfig hill.

Mr. David Hunt: The inspector's report will be published when my decision letter on the planning appeal is issued. The case is currently receiving consideration and a decision will be issued as soon as possible.

Minerals Planning Guidance 3

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the review he is undertaking of minerals planning guidance 3.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: As part of the monitoring of minerals planning guidance Note 3, views were sought on how well the guidelines were operating and whether they had created any problems. The responses of consultees are currently being evaluated and, in the light of the results of that evaluation, we shall consider whether there is a need for any revision of minerals planning guidance note 3. A decision will be announced as soon as possible.

National Opera House

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a copy of the report he commissioned into the engineering and financial feasibility of the proposed new home in Cardiff bay for the Welsh national opera house.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 12 June 1992]:* I hope to do so shortly.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Lignite Resources

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the quality and extent of lignite resources confirmed in the Ballymoney area of Co. Antrim.

Mr. Atkins: Consultants have, on behalf of the Department of Economic Development, carried out an initial study which estimated a lignite resource at Ballymoney of almost 350 million tonnes. The licensee has carried out more extensive prospecting work and estimates the total resource to exceed 600 million tonnes. In general terms, lignite has an energy value approximately one third of that of hard coal. Precise details on the quality of the Ballymoney resource are commercially confidential.

Schools

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many pupils are at each of *(a)* the primary and *(b)* secondary schools in the constituency of Newry and Armagh in (i) the maintained, (ii) the controlled and (iii) the integrated sectors of education.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

	Numbers
Primary schools maintained	
Anamar, Crossmaglen, Newry	76
Armagh Christian Bros, Armagh	463
Carrickrovaddy, Newry	34
Clady (St. Michael's), Armagh	38
Clay, Keady, Armagh	70
Clonalig, Newry	181
Cloughoge, Newry	379
Collegeland, Dungannon	42
Dromintee, Newry	133
Glassdrummond, Armagh	88
Jonesborough, Newry	142
Killeen, Newry	111
Lissummon, Newry	36
Loughgall, Loughgall	45
Middletown boys', Armagh	52
Mount St. Catherine's, Armagh	467
Newtownhamilton (St. Michael's), Newtownhamilton	97
Our Lady's, Keady	43
St. Brigid's, Newry	139
St. Brigid's, Belleeks, Newry	85
St. Clare's Convent, Armagh	248
St. Clare's Convent, Newry	654
St. Colman's Abbey, Newry	721
St. Colmcille's, Armagh	29
St. James', Markethill	48
St. James', Tandragee	68
St. Jarlath's, Dungannon	157
St. Joseph's Convent, Newry	453
St. Joseph's, Armagh	133
St. Joseph's, Poyntzpass, Newry	91
St. Joseph's, Killeavy	175
St. Joseph's, Bessbrook, Newry	406
St. Lawrence's, Belleeks, Newry	54
St. Louis' Convent, Middletown	51
St. Malachy's, Armagh	76
St. Malachy's, Chapel Lane, Armagh	210
St. Malachy's, Camlough, Newry	283
St. Malachy's Carnagat, Newry	454
St. Mary's Boys', Keady, Armagh	233
St. Mary's, Tassagh, Armagh	69
St. Mary's, Jerrettspass, Newry	53
St. Mary's, Mullaghbawn, Newry	226
St. Mochua's, Keady, Armagh	104
St. Oliver Plunkett, Newry	92
St. Oliver, Plunkett, Armagh	111
St. Patrick's Boys', Newry	382
St. Patrick's, Crossmaglen, Newry	323
St. Patrick's, Armagh	533
St. Patrick's, Cullyhanna, Newry	282
St. Peter's, Bessbrook	274
Tullyheron, Mountnorris	48
Tullymore, Armagh	56
Tullysaran, Armagh	77
Primary schools controlled	
Aghavilly, Armagh	90
Ahorey, Portadown	21
Annaghmore, Portadown	79
Armstrong, Armagh	400
Bessbrook, Newry	118
Cabra, Tandragee, Portadown	30
Clare, Tandragee, Craigavon	69
Collone, Armagh	127
Cormiamlet, Newry	39
Darkley, Armagh	110
Derryhale, Portadown	80
Drumhillery, Armagh	68
Drumsallen, Armagh	47
Foley, Armagh	102
Hamiltonsbawn, Armagh	112
Hardy Memorial, Armagh	492
Keady, Armagh	44
Killylea, Armagh	85
Kingsmills, Armagh	27
Kinnego, Dungannon	23
Lisdrumchor, Armagh	27
Lisnadill, Armagh	71
Mountnorris, Armagh	76
Mullaghglass, Newry	69
Mullavilly, Tandragee	68
Newry Model, Newry	35
Newtownhamilton, Newry	119
Poyntzpass, Newry	69
Tandragee, Tandragee	321
The Cope, Armagh	113
Tullyroan, Dungannon	40
Windsor Hill, Newry	216
Secondary schools maintained	
St. Brigid's High, Armagh	278

	Numbers
St. Catherine's College, Armagh	843
St. Joseph's Boys' High, Newry	451
St. Joseph's High, Crossmaglen	568
St. Mary's Girls' High, Newry	550
St. Patrick's High, Keady	843
St. Paul's High, Newry	1,265
Controlled	
Armagh, Armagh	579
Markethill High, Markethill	445
Newry High, Newry	570
Newtownhamilton High, Newtownhamilton	97
Tandragee Junio High, Tandragee	318
Grammar schools voluntary	
Abbey, Newry	710
Our Lady's Newry	812
Sacred Heart, Newry	807
St. Colman's College, Newry	770
The Royal School, Armagh, College Hill, Armagh	643
There are no integrated schools in the area.	

Notes:

[1] Enrolment figures are taken from the annual school census, completed at January each year.

[2] Pupils enrolled in nursery classes in primary schools are included in the enrolment figures.

Metal-framed Windows

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place in the Library a copy of the report by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive into the replacement of metal-framed windows and the fairness of the programme in the various parts of the Province.

Mr. Atkins: I am advised by the chairman of the Housing Executive that the executive is carrying out a survey into the extent of the replacement of metal windows over the last three years. The survey will also list the stock which still has metal windows. It is intended to provide a data base which will be kept updated as renovation schemes are completed and dwellings sold or demolished. Although this is an internal executive survey, I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Gentleman with the results when the work is completed in a few weeks.

Housing Grants

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, column *109*, what was the basis for the decision at his Office to refuse to accept all new preliminary applications after 28 February for housing grants other than applications for special grants and grants dealing with statutory notices; and when it is expected that the new renovation grants scheme will be introduced.

Mr. Atkins: It is anticipated that the new renovation grant scheme will come into operation on 1 October 1992. The suspension of the acceptance of new preliminary applications for grant is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but the chairman has advised me that the decision was taken to enable those preliminary applications already in the pipeline to be processed to formal application stage, where possible, before the introduction of the new legislation, since from that date the executive will be statutorily debarred from accepting formal applications under the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1983. Grant applications approved or processed to the formal stage by that date can be paid under the 1983 order because transitional arrangements for these have been included in the proposed new legislation. The executive was conscious that, had it continued to accept preliminary applications it would have done so in the knowledge that applicants who may have incurred expenditure would not have been able to progress their applications to formal application stage by October 1992.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Relocation

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what future plans he has to relocate civil service posts from the south-east of England to elsewhere in the United Kingdom; what departments and how many staff will be affected; what is their expected relocation; and if he will will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The table lists, with likely timings, the plans which Departments and agencies have announced for relocations or locations away from the south-east which have still to be implemented or completed.

Department and dispersal location	*Number of posts*	*Likely timing*
Defence		
Bristol	3,000	1995-96
Brampton or Wyton	380	1994-95
Bath	250	1994
Insworth	120	1994-95
	3,750	
Inland Revenue		
Middlesbrough	185	1991-92
Sunderland	190	1991-92
Barnsley	170	1992
Birkenhead	170	1992
Dundee	160	1992
Falkirk	160	1992
Hull	180	1992
Leicester	160	1992
St. Austell	160	1992
Swansea	165	1992
Wrexham	180	1992
Nottingham	1,800	1992-95
Washington	60	1992
	3,740	
Social Security		
Leeds	662	1992-93
Belfast	500	1993
Birkenhead	500	1993
Dudley	500	1993
Falkirk	500	1993
Plymouth	500	1993
	3,162	
Home Office		
Ruddington	120	1992
Birmingham	12	1992-93
Derby	1,700	1993-95
	1,832	
Customs and Excise		
Liverpool	1,290	1990-95
Manchester	390	1990-95
Newry	94	1992-93
	1,774	

Department and dispersal location	Number of posts	Likely timing
Employment Group		
Runcorn	400	1990-93
Sheffield	848	1990-93
Aberdeen	85	1992-94
Bootle	56	1992-94
	1,389	
Health		
Leeds	1,200	1992-93
MAFF		
York	1,000	1994-96
Land Registry		
Birkenhead	110	1992-93
York	110	1992-94
	220	
Treasury		
Norwich	200	1992-95
Crown Prosecution Service		
York	50	1993-94
Total	18,317	

Premium Bonds

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to change the premium bond prize scheme when the national lottery is introduced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: I have no present plans to change the existing premium bond prize scheme.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: to ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all those functions and areas in his Department and associated agencies that have been identified for market testing in the wake of the White Paper "Competing for Quality".

Mr. Portillo: Following the publication of "Competing for Quality", a review of the scope for market testing services in the Treasury has been undertaken and an announcement about the target for market testing in 1992-93 will be made shortly.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the purpose of the meeting between Treasury officials and Mr. Jerry Walters from Messrs. Simmonds and Simmonds concerning BCCI on 10 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: A delegation including Mr. Jerry Walters attended a meeting at the Treasury on 10 June to discuss European directives. BCCI was not raised.

North Sea Oil

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the Government's total income, to date, from North sea oil since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: Total revenues to the Exchequer from the North sea since 1979-80 have been £71 billion.

Lloyd's Underwriters

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total estimated value of the tax changes provided in the Lloyd's Underwriters (Tax) (1989-90) Regulations 1992, SI 1992 No. 511 which came into force on 28 March; what consultations were held with which parties prior to laying the regulations on 6 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The regulations involve no change in underwriters' tax liabilities or retrospective tax concessions. They renew for a further year the improved administrative arrangements, introduced last year, whereby the underwriter's agent is made responsible for accounting for tax due at the basic rate on the underwriter's profits. Before their introduction in 1991, these new arrangements were discussed with Lloyd's.

Charitable Status

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the loss to tax revenue if the governing bodies of amateur sport were to be granted charitable status.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that the information requested is not available. Charities enjoy exemption from tax only on income which is applied to charitable purposes, or where it arises as part of the exercise of a primary purpose of the charity or from a trade carried out by the beneficiaries of the charity. Sport is not a charitable activity.

Stamp Duty

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the cost to public funds hitherto of the provisions of the Stamp Duty (Temporary Provisions) Act 1992.

Mr. Dorrell: The cost of the increase in the stamp duty threshold from £30,000 to £250,000 for eight months from 20 December 1991 will be about £400 million—£110 million in 1991-92 and £290 million in 1992-93.

Agencies

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what guidance the Treasury is providing on the setting of targets for executive agencies.

Mr. Portillo: A booklet prepared by HM Treasury entitled "Executive Agencies: A Guide to Setting Targets and Measuring Performance" is today published by HMSO. Copies will be placed in the Library of the House.

A draft of this guide was printed in the report of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee on the "next steps" initiative, in July 1991 (No. 496).

The guide describes targets for financial performance, quality, efficiency, and other aspects of performance, and makes suggestions on how to assess the results. Although primarily addressed to advisers in Government Departments, it will be of interest to managers in all the public services, and to all who are concerned with improving the performance of their organisations in accordance with the citizens charter.

VAT

Mr. Michael: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will list those commodities and services currently rated for VAT *(a)* at zero and *(b)* at a level below the maximum and indicate which of those would be enshrined or protected by the terms of the Maastricht treaty;

(2) if he will list those commodities and services currently rated for VAT *(a)* at zero and *(b)* at a level below the maximum and indicate which of those would be enshrined or protected by the terms of the draft European directive on VAT.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* Those goods and services which are currently zero-rated for VAT are as follows. There is no reduced rate category in the United Kingdom.

Food, including animal feeding stuffs (i)
Sewerage services and water (ii)
Books, booklets, pamphlets and leaflets, newspapers, journals and periodicals, sheet music, maps, charts and topographical plans.
Talking books for the blind and handicapped and wireless sets for the blind.
Fuel and power (ii)
Construction of buildings (iii)
Reconstruction of protected buildings
International services
Transport (iv)
Residential caravans and houseboats (v)
Gold (vi)
Bank notes.
Drugs, medicines, aids for the handicapped.
Certain supplies connected with imports and exports to overseas bodies in connection with international collaboration on defence projects.
Certain supplies made by or to charities.
Young children's clothing and footwear.
Protective boots and helmets.

Notes

(i) excludes the supply of food in the course of catering and certain items such as confectionery, crisps and packaged pet food.
(ii) zero-rating applies to domestic use only.
(iii) excludes commercial buildings.
(iv) excludes the supply of ships and aircraft used for recreation or pleasure.
(v) excludes holiday accommodation.
(vi) zero-rating applies to transactions between central banks and the London Gold Market.

The latest text of the EC draft directive on the approximation of VAT rates contains provision for member states which as at 1 January 1991 applied a lower rate, including zero-rates, than the minimum laid down for the reduced rate, in accordance with Community law then in force, to retain those rates.

VAT rates are not affected by the Maastricht treaty.

HEALTH

Children Act 1989

10. **Mr. Olner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the operation of the Children Act 1989, since its implementation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There has been a positive and enthusiastic response to the Act from those in the statutory and voluntary sector. The Children Act is the most important step forward this century in the protection afforded vulnerable children in our society. The Act is operating well. At the end of this year I shall be submitting a report to Parliament on the first year of the Act in operation.

Elderly People

11. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance on good practice she gives hospitals and health authorities on the provision of long-term hospital accommodation for the elderly.

Mr. Sackville: We made it clear in "Caring for People" that we expect health authorities to purchase continuous residential health care for those highly dependent elderly people who need it. We believe that such care is best provided in small, homely units in the community.

Health Promotion

13. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations she has received regarding the proposed White Paper on health promotion.

Dr. Mawhinney: About 2,100 responses have now been received in response to the "Health of the Nation" Green Paper. We welcome this evidence of the very wide interest in the Government's initiative to improve health. We intend to publish our White Paper shortly.

Residential Care

14. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she last met representatives of the Social Care Association to discuss residential care.

Mr. Yeo: We last met representatives of the Social Care Association in October 1990. Officials are in regular touch with the association.

17. **Mr. Bryan Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the resources to be transferred to local authorities for funding residential care.

Mr. Yeo: We are committed to providing adequate resources to enable local authorities to meet their new community care responsibilities. Decisions on the transfer and the overall level of resources required will be taken in the context of this year's local government expenditure survey.

Air Ambulance Service (Cornwall)

15. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial support her Department has given to the Cornwall first air ambulance service.

Mr. Sackville: The capital and running costs of Cornwall air ambulance service are provided by charitable donations. The paramedical services are provided by the Cornwall Community Healthcare Trust.

Aids

16. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action the United Kingdom is taking through the World Health Organisation and the European Community to combat the global spread of AIDS.

Mr. Yeo: The United Kingdom has been an active supporter of the World Health Organisation's global

programme on AIDS since its inception and is currently the third largest donor. As a member state of the European Community, we provide support for the various EC AIDS initiatives, namely the "Europe against AIDS" programme, the AIDS task force and the EC biomedical and health research programme, which has a substantial AIDS component. The United Kingdom participates in the development of advice for the Council of Health Ministers through the ad hoc group on AIDS. We provide support for the European Community's AIDS progamme for developing countries through our contribution to the European Development Fund and the Community budget.

Hospital Trusts

18. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals or units expressed an interest in acquiring NHS trust status *(a)* for April 1991, *(b)* for April 1992 and *(c)* for April 1993; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: A total of 83 hospitals and units expressed an interest in becoming NHS trusts from 1991, 66 applied and 57 were established. In the following year 130 expressed interest, 110 applied and 103 were established. The current position for the third wave of applications is that 154 hospitals and units have expressed an interest in becoming NHS trusts from April 1993 and 151 have so far applied. This is more than in either of the first two waves. This shows that staff and managers in the NHS increasingly are seeing trusts as the best way to improve services for patients.

27. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many applications she has received for hospital trust status; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), earlier today.

28. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in Shropshire towards practice budgets for doctors and trust status for hospitals.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are currently five GP fund holders in Shropshire serving 12·7 per cent. of the population. A further four practices have applied for fund-holding status from April 1993, and if successful, 23 per cent. of the population of Shropshire will then be served by GP fund holders.

We have received two formal applications for trust status from units in Shropshire: one from the Princess Royal hospital in Telford; and one from Shropshire mental health services. These applications are now out for formal public consultation.

Health Authorities, Cumbria

19. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has to alter the boundaries of the three district health authorities in Cumbria.

Mr. Sackville: None at present. Northern regional health authority, together with its district health authorities (DHAs) and family health services authorities are currently considering the best way to develop DHAs' central role in purchasing health care on behalf of their residents; including the possibility of joint working with neighbouring authorities.

Malpractice and Fraud

20. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will introduce a code of practice designed to protect the position of those NHS employees who draw attention to malpractice and fraud; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: It is important that all NHS staff should express professional concerns about health service issues to their managers. Employing authorities need to acknowledge this duty, but they must also retain the right to take action in cases of improper disclosure of confidential material, such as personal patient information. Staff aggrieved by any disciplinary action taken by their employer have recourse to established grievances procedures.

Private Health Care

21. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what figures she has for the number of persons making private health care arrangements in west Cumbria.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally.

Building Projects

22. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many national health service building projects have been completed in England since 1979; and how many are under way.

Dr. Mawhinney: More than 600 capital schemes, each costing more than £1 million, have been completed in the national health service since 1979. A further 400 such schemes are in various stages of planning, design and construction, of which 105 are currently under construction.

Abortion

23. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many late abortions of pre-born children occurred after 18 weeks gestation during the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: There were 5,061 abortions over 18 weeks notified under the Abortion Act 1967 in England and Wales in the period 1 October 1990 to 31 September 1991, 2·8 per cent. of the total number.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many sterilisation and abortion operations have been performed on mentally disabled women in the last 12 months for which figures are available; what criteria were used in arriving at these decisions; and how many girls, under the age of 16 years, have been sterilised in the last 12 months for which figures are available, and on what grounds.

Mr. Sackville: Information about the number of sterilisation operations is not available in the form requested. Details of the medical condition recorded on abortion notification forms—including unspecified mental retardation—are given in table 27 of the 1990 "Abortion Statistics" (Series AB No. 17) published by the Office of

Population Censuses and Surveys, a copy of which is available in the Library. The criteria for reaching decisions vary from case to case and can involve relatives and carers, and possibly reference to the courts. The national health service "Hospital Episode Statistics" show that only one female sterilisation operation was performed on a patient under the age of 16 in England in 1990-91.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines are issued to health authorities concerning the use of amniocentesis and chorionic villus sampling tests; how many tests were made under each procedure in the last year for which figures are available; how many pregnancies ended in spontaneous abortions following testing; how many ended in clinical abortions; how many babies born after being tested by CVS were discovered to have a physical or mental handicap; what evidence she has of links between the CVS test and disability; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Guidelines to providers of maternity services on the use of tests for fetal abnormalities are contained in the first report of the Maternity Services Advisory Committee: "Maternity Care in Action—Antenatal Care", at paragraph 4.27. Copies are available in the Library. Information on the number of tests carried out under each procedure is not held centrally.

Information on the number of pregnancies which end in miscarriage following testing is not held centrally. Studies have indicated that amniocentesis is associated with miscarriage in one or two cases in every 200 where the procedure is used. It is more difficult to estimate the level of the association between miscarriage and chorionic villus sampling (CVS), because studies are unable to identify women who would have miscarried among those who request and have termination of pregnancy following a diagnosis of cytogenic abnormality. A recent randomised controlled trial carried out by the Medical Research Council compared CVS with amniocentesis and found that a woman undergoing CVS has a one in 20 less chance of a successful outcome to her pregnancy than a woman undergoing amniocentesis in the second trimester of pregnancy.

Information on the number of pregnancies which ended in a termination following testing is not held centrally. It is likely that the majority of such terminations would be for chromosomal abnormality in the fetus, and in 1990 this condition was reported in 273 terminations (England and Wales).

Following reports of a possible association between the use of CVS and the occurrence of limb reduction defects, an investigation was made by the European registration of congenital anomalies and twins (EUROCAT) into seven of its registries, covering 600,000 births. The investigation did not demonstrate a significantly increased risk associated with exposure to CVS in the areas covered by these seven registries.

We are not aware of any evidence linking CVS with mental handicap.

Community Care

24. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she next expects to meet representatives of local authorities to discuss the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

Mr. Yeo: We have regular and constructive meetings with representatives of the local authority associations at which we discuss many aspects of social services provision including the implementation of our community care policy. We are next due to meet on 1 July.

Waiting Lists

25. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many in-patients are waiting longer than a year for treatment; and what was the comparable number *(a)* in March 1979 and *(b)* in March 1991.

Mr. Sackville: Provisional figures for 31 March 1992 are given in the table. These show that between March 1979 and March 1992 the total number of in-patients waiting over a year fell by 63 per cent.

In-patients waiting over 1 year

	Number waiting
March 1979	185,195
March 1991	170,065
March 1992	[1]68,650

[1] Based on provisional figures from regional health authorities.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will arrange to collect centrally statistics on *(a)* first out-patient waiting lists, *(b)* in-patient 12 to 24 month waiting lists and *(c)* in-patient 0 to 12-month waiting lists.

Mr. Sackville: Figures for out-patient waiting times are not collected centrally, but all health authorities are required under the patients charter to publish information on the local standards they have set for waiting times for first out-patient appointments and on performance against these targets. The Department regularly publishes statistical bulletins which include the numbers of people waiting for in-patient and day case hospital treatment in the 0 to 12 and 12 to 24 month categories. The most recent information for the six months to September 1991 was published on 4 June. For provisional figures covering the period up to 30 April 1992, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) on 10 June at columns *219-20*.

Residential Homes

26. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has any proposals to change the current arrangements for the monitoring and inspection of private care or nursing homes.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) earlier today.

Maternity Services

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of home confinements as a percentage of all live births in each NHS region since 1987.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is shown in the table.

Home confinements as a percentage of all live births 1987-1991

Regional Health Authority	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
England and Wales	0·9	0·9	1·0	1·0	1·1
Northern	0·4	0·5	0·5	0·4	0·5

Regional Health Authority	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Yorkshire	0·8	0·9	0·9	0·8	0·8
Trent	0·8	0·8	0·9	0·9	1·0
East Anglian	1·5	1·6	1·6	1·6	1·6
North West Thames	0·8	0·7	0·9	1·0	1·1
North East Thames	1·1	1·1	1·2	1·3	1·5
South East Thames	1·2	1·4	1·4	1·7	1·8
South West Thames	0·9	1·0	1·1	1·1	1·4
Wessex	0·9	0·9	1·1	1·1	1·2
Oxford	0·7	0·8	1·0	0·9	1·1
South Western	1·1	1·4	1·5	1·7	1·8
West Midlands	0·9	0·8	0·9	0·9	0·8
Mersey	0·5	0·7	0·7	0·6	0·8
North Western	0·6	0·6	0·8	0·8	0·7

Adoptions

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations were made to the Romanian Committee for adoptions by the United Kingdom Government concerning the conditions on age of prospective adoptive parents incorporated in the agreement signed by the Department of Health on 19 March.

Mr. Yeo: The age of prospective adopting parents seeking to adopt a child from Romania was one of more than 40 conditions contained in the draft agreement prepared by the Romanian Committee for Adoptions in January this year. They were the subject of detailed negotiations with the committee before the agreement was signed on 19 March 1992.

Discussions between the Department of Health, acting on behalf of the United Kingdom health departments, and the Romanian Committee for Adoptions took place between January and March prior to a team of officials from the Department of Health visiting Romania and continuing negotiations direct with the committee.

The conditions contained in the agreement with the United Kingdom are essentially the same as for the signatories of 11 other countries. Without this agreement in place, prospective adopters are unable to apply to adopt a Romanian child.

Dentistry

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of people aged *(a)* 18 years and below and *(b)* over 19 years who received out-patient dental treatment from the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale district health authority in each year from 1985, and from Burnley Health Care since its establishment as an NHS trust.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. W. Ashworth, chairman, Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority and Mr. J. H. C. Rawson, chairman, Burnley health care NHS trust for details.

Finance

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been allocated in joint finance money by regional health authorities in England; and what proportion has been spent on projects for people with learning disabilities.

Mr. Yeo: Allocations to regional health authorities in England for joint finance total £134·696 million in 1992-93. Information is not collected centrally on spending by client group.

Euthanasia

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the guidance she gives to health authorities about the receipt from patients of advance directives commissioning their killing by euthanasia administered by doctors and nurses.

Mr. Sackville: We have issued no guidance to health authorities on such directives. Patients are fully entitled to make known in advance their views on possible future medical treatment. Any health professional, however, whilst taking account of the patient's wishes, is bound by the law, and cannot be required to take any action which conflicts with this.

South Yorkshire Ambulance Service

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received and what data she has in her possession concerning delays in *(a)* reception of 999 calls at the headquarters of the South Yorkshire ambulance service, *(b)* the dispatch of emergency calls from that headquarters and *(c)* the arrival of ambulance at an emergency incident; and what were the comparative figures for (i) 24 months, (ii) 36 months and (iii) 48 months ago.

Mr. Sackville: No recent representations have been received about the performance of the service.

Call logging equipment in use at service headquarters during the last 18 months has shown that on average, 999 calls coming into service control take approximately five seconds to be answered.

The latest activation and response time figures are given in the tables.

Patient Transport Services
1988-89—1991-92
Quality of service for South Yorkshire Ambulance Service
Table 1
Activation time

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	[1]1991-92
Total number of emergency calls	57,580	58,842	64,863	64,073
Number where activation within three minutes	50,516	44,412	56,041	55,782
Percentage of calls where activation within three minutes	87·7	75·5	86·4	87·1

Table 2
Response times

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*[1]1991-92*
Total number of emergency calls	57,580	58,842	64,863	64,073
Number where response within seven minutes	18,470	16,764	20,246	18,797
Percentage of calls where response within seven minutes	32·1	28·5	31·2	29·3
Number where response within 14 minutes	44,210	41,627	48,877	48,509
Percentage of calls where response within 14 minutes	76·8	70·7	75·4	75·7

[1] Information supplied by South Yorkshire Ambulance Service: not validated centrally.

War Pensioners

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes there have been since 1990 in the guidance given by her Department on priority treatment for war pensioners; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: There have been no changes. New guidance will be issued in the near future.

Disability

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people claiming disability working allowance also receive health benefits; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available.

Diabetes

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether Reflolux meters for monitoring blood count in the treatment of diabetics are available on prescription.

Dr. Mawhinney: A meter may be provided through the hospital service if the consultant in charge of the patient's care considers it clinically necessary. Meters are not available on prescription.

Liver Transplants

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the annual cost of liver transplantation in the national health service.

Mr. Sackville: In the year ending 31 March 1992 expenditure on liver transplantation and associated follow-up services amounted to £13·7 million.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the provision for liver transplantation in the national health service; and what information she has on the number of patients waiting for, and in the convalescent period after, such transplants and the estimated distances such patients have to travel for treatment.

Mr. Sackville: The number of liver transplants performed in the United Kingdom rose from 21 in 1982 to 419 in 1991. A total of 64 patients were reported to be awaiting liver transplants at 30 April 1992. There are no figures held centrally on the numbers of people in convalescence following liver transplants.

Information on the distances patients have to travel for transplant treatment is not collected centrally. There are six designated centres where liver transplants are performed. Two of the hospitals are in London; the others are in Cambridge, Birmingham, Leeds and Newcastle. The provision of designated liver transplant centres is kept under constant review.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in how many answers from her Department to parliamentary questions in *(a)* the current and *(b)* the last session of Parliament hon. Members have been advised to contact the chairman of a district health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Eleven so far in this Session and 33 in the 1991-92 Session.

NHS Finance

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to collect centrally information on the amount of over or under-spending and the throughput of patients in each of the last five years of major general hospitals in each region.

Mr. Sackville: There are no current plans to require this information to be collected centrally.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list *(a)* the amount of over and under-spending in each of the last five years and *(b)* the throughput of patients over each of the last five years in the Warrington health authority.

Mr. Sackville: The information about over and under spending is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. D. Hannah, the chairman of Warrington health authority, for details.

The information requested on throughput of patients is given in the table.

Throughput of patients (patients treated per available bed): Warrington Health Authority

	Cases treated	*Available beds*	*Throughput*
1986	[1]28,228	2,434	12
1987-88	[1]30,330	2,180	14
1988-89	30,334	2,056	15
1989-90	32,300	1,797	18
1990-91	[2]34,023	1,532	22

Source: SH3, KH03, KP70.

[1] The figures for 1986/1987-88 have been converted from the old measurement of discharges and deaths into the present measurement of finished consultant episodes. During 1988-89, information on patient cases treated was collected on both bases to facilitate this conversion.

[2] The figures for 1990-91 are provisional.

Charitable Fund Raising

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will consider introducing guidelines for hospital trust charitable fund-raising organisations to avoid them competing for business with charitable fund raising for hospices.

Mr. Sackville: It is not for the Government to direct trustees of hospitals in their fund-raising ventures. We believe that the detail of fund-raising events are best decided at local level in the light of local needs and priorities.

Child Care

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make money available to local authorities so that schools can provide pre-school and after-school care for children of working parents.

Mr. Yeo: It is inappropriate to use public funds to help all parents pay for day care services for their children. Public funds should be targeted on children in need.

Multiple Sclerosis

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has to resite the Association for Research into Multiple Sclerosis following the proposed closure of the Central Middlesex hospital; and if she will take account of the needs of multiple sclerosis sufferers at present treated there.

Mr. Sackville: I am not aware of any proposals to close Central Middlesex hospital.

The hospital provides accommodation and other assistance to the charity Action Research into Multiple Sclerosis. I understand that the charity's centre at the hospital has run into serious financial problems, putting at risk the therapy and diagnostic services it has been providing for between 400 and 500 patients.

The Department of Health agreed in May to provide £75,000 to the Central Middlesex hospital to avoid disruption of treatment for patients.

Blood Transfusion Service

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has any plans to introduce screening for human T-cell leukaemia in the blood transfusion service.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 15 June 1992 at columns *415-16*.

TRANSPORT

M25

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to complete his consultations and to publish his proposals for improving the M25 motorway between junctions 11 and 16.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department announced its plans for improving the M25 last September. The next step will be a public exhibition of its proposals for increasing the capacity of the M25 beyond dual four lanes between junction 12 to 15. Work on widening the motorway to dual four lanes between junctions 15 and 16 is expected to start in the autumn. Consultants have not yet been appointed to investigate options for providing additional capacity between junctions 11 and 12.

Road Safety Schemes

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what road safety schemes his Department is currently supporting; and how much funding is allocated to these schemes.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A total of £31 million was earmarked for local safety schemes in the 1991-92 local roads capital settlement. A total of £43 million has been provided for this purpose in 1992-93. Information on individual schemes executed by local highway authorities using the funds is not readily available, but the average cost of a local safety scheme is about £10,000.

The Department of Transport spent £10 million on about 300 safety schemes on its trunk roads in 1991-92. That rate of expenditure is expected to continue in 1992-93.

Cars

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what reports he has received on the hazards of electric windows in cars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have reports of two cases of electric windows in vehicles causing fatalities to children over the past six years, including the recent tragedy. Both accidents were caused by the children inadvertently actuating switches. The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders has now asked its members to review their designs and will shortly be meeting to discuss further action. I have asked to be kept informed of the outcome of these discussions. The vehicle inspectorate has also now examined the car involved in the recent tragedy, to determine whether there were any defects in the particular vehicle. It will shortly be reporting its findings to me.

Goods Vehicle Drivers

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many light goods vehicle drivers have been unable to follow their employment as a result of the revocation or suspension of their licences by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency medical branch; and if he will introduce a proper compensation scheme for such drivers for their loss of income during the suspension or revocation period.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No information is available to the Department on the number of LGV drivers who have been unable to follow their employment as a result of revocation of their licences on medical grounds by the DVLA.

Drivers have a right of appeal through the magistrates courts against a decision to revoke their licence. If compensation is awarded, the Department has a legal obligation to pay. Proven cases of maladministration may justify an ex gratia compensation payment.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many LGV drivers have had their licences

revoked or suspended in each year since 1988 for *(a)* heart problems, *(b)* epilepsy and *(c)* other medical conditions; how many of these drivers have subsequently had their licences restored; and what is the average time period involved.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Information on the number of LGV drivers who have had their licences revoked on medical grounds is available only from September 1991. Since that date, 541 drivers have had their licences revoked because of heart problems, 97 because of epilepsy and 577 because of other medical conditions.

Five LGV drivers have had their licences restored following appeal to the courts since April 1991, the cases taking between one and five months to resolve.

Commuters

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he proposes to institute a London travel survey in order to ascertain the main reasons for commuters travelling in and out of London at particular times; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: A major survey of travel in London was conducted during 1991—the London area transport survey. This will provide comprehensive information on journey purposes and times for each mode of travel. For respondents living in the area bounded by the M25 and who usually arrive at work between 8 am and 9.30 am, the survey also asked whether they could change their hours to avoid travelling during the peak period. The results of the survey will be available by summer 1993.

In addition, as part of the London road pricing research programme, the Department intends to commission a small survey to assess how motorists, including commuters, would adjust their times of travel in response to charges. The survey is likely to take place this summer.

A10

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the latest position as regards the consultation study of Travers-Morgan Associates on the A10 Hoddesdon-Cambridge section as outlined in "Roads to Prosperity."

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is currently awaiting the consultant's report and recommendations. We expect them shortly.

A1

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether tenders have been received for works to the A1 to upgrade to motorway standard between Wetherby and Boroughbridge; and what is the programme of works.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. The necessary preparatory works are not yet sufficiently advanced to enable tenders to be invited.

The proposed upgrading of the A1 to a motorway along the stretch in question is covered by two schemes in the roads programme. The first and more advanced is the Walshford to Dishforth scheme which was taken to public inquiry in March 1992. Subject to the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures, and the availability of funds, tenders could be invited next year. The other is the Wetherby to Walshford scheme for which the preferred route was announced in September 1991. The next stage is publication of draft orders under the Highways Act 1980.

A40

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the A40 through Cheltenham to be detrunked; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The time scale for the detrunking of the A40 in Cheltenham is dependent on the Department's proposals to provide a southerly alternative trunk road route. This consists of Brockworth bypass on the A417, including a new junction with the M5, together with any improvements that may be required to bring the A436 from Shipton Solers to Air Balloon up to a trunk road standard.

Given a favourable outcome from the recent public inquiry, and subject to the continuing availability of funds, the construction of Brockworth bypass might be completed by the mid-1990s. A feasibility study into the improvements necessary on the A436 route will be undertaken shortly. A decision on detrunking the A40 in Cheltenham will be made in the light of that.

Severn Crossing

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when a second Severn river crossing will be completed.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The second Severn crossing is due to be completed in spring 1996.

Railway Passenger Services

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the Government's proposals for railway passenger services franchising as they relate to the Uckfield service.

Mr. Freeman: Our proposals are for the private sector progressively to take over the operation of passenger services under franchises, including services on the Uckfield line, while British Rail will retain responsibility for track and signalling. We intend to publish a White Paper shortly which will set out our proposals in more detail.

York Ring Road

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will publish the outline plans for the dualling of the northern section of the York outer ring road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I expect outline plans to be published later this year showing proposals for the improvement of the trunk road section of the York northern bypass, between the A19 of Rawcliffe and the A64 at Hopgrove. That will follow the completion of work carried out by the appointed consulting engineer on alternative solutions to the problems on that stretch of road.

Noise Insulation

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the report of the interdepartmental committee which is considering the extension of the noise insulation scheme in the vicinity of civilian airports to schools, hospitals and other institutions.

Mr. Norris: I still await the report from the working group led by my Department. Further detailed consultation at official level is required, and is taking longer than expected. I hope that the report can be finalised within the next few months.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the terms of reference and the composition of the interdepartmental committee which is considering the extension of the noise insulation scheme in the vicinity of civilian airports to schools, hospitals and other institutions.

Mr. Norris: There are no "terms of reference" as such. The Department of Transport agreed to investigate the costs and practicability of a scheme for insulting schools and hospitals and to report back. It was decided that the report should be submitted to the Department of Transport and the Ministry of Defence for ministerial decision. The group comprises representatives from the highways and civil aviation divisions of the Department of Transport, and from the Department of the Environment, the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and the Treasury.

Driving Licences

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the cost of obtaining a medical examination was taken into account in raising the fee for a heavy goods vehicle driving licence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Large goods and passenger-carrying vehicle licence fees are set to recover the administrative costs of licence issue. No account is taken of the cost of obtaining the medical report required by law at initial application for or subsequent renewal of a licence.

Hazardous Chemicals

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has made to the European Commission to ensure that the Hazchem system of marking hazardous substances is retained for all transportation of these substances in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) on 12 June 1992 at column *299*.

Motorway Construction

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average cost of providing one kilometre of motorway in a rural area, broken down into *(a)* cost of land purchase and *(b)* cost of construction.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* Construction costs of roads vary substantially depending on factors such as location and the need for structures. In view of that, the Department does not prepare information on the average cost of road construction per kilometre. "Trunk Roads: England into the 1990s" contains full details, including estimated works costs, of all schemes in the trunk road programme.

Motor Cycles

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many EEC member states have adopted stage 1 noise limits under the relevant noise limits directive for motor cycles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* Our understanding is that all member states have taken legislative or administrative action to implement the stage I noise limits in EC directive 87/56.

A12

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the role of his Department's officials who attended the Suffolk county and Waveney district joint members' and officers' meeting in Lowestoft on 9 June about the A12 proposals within Lowestoft; and what information the officials were to deliver to the meeting about timing.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* The meeting was one of a series of regular exchanges of information and views on transport issues. The Department's officials were able to report that public consultation on alternative routes for the improved Pakefield to Kessingland section of the A12, the Lowestoft relief road scheme, was planned for later this year.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement on the timing of consultation, design and building he now expects to take place in fulfilment of commitments in the White Paper "Roads to Prosperity" for the A12 in Waveney, from Blythburgh to Kessingland, from Kessingland to Bloodmoor road, and from Bloodmoor road to Pleasurewood; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what are his plans for keeping the hon. Member for Waveney informed about changes on planning, timing, consultation and construction he is proposing in the dualling of the A12 from Ipswich to Great Yarmouth since the publication of the White Paper, "Roads to Prosperity", and since statements made in the last Parliament by his predecessor.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* Schemes to improve the A12 are at different stages in their development. The present programme for consultation is:

Blythburgh to south of Wrentham	late 1993
South of Wrentham to Kessingland	late 1992
Lowestoft inner relief road	
Kessingland to Bloodmoor road section	late 1992

A preferred route was announced for the Bloodmoor road to Pleasurewood section of Lowestoft inner relief road in November 1990.

The timing of subsequent stages will depend on the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures and the availability of funds.

The hon. Member will be informed as a matter of course at the key stages of public consultation, order publication, public inquiry, when the decision is announced following the inquiry and when construction is due to start.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability Benefits

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement concerning delays in the introduction of the new disability living allowance and the financial difficulties caused to those people who previously claimed disability benefit.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many applications for disability living allowance *(a)* have been referred for a medical examination by the adjudication officer in order to assess the claim and *(b)* have included a request from the claimant for a medical examination;

(2) what was the number of applications received by his Department for disability living allowance where the form was completed through the benefits inquiry line completion service; and what was the number and percentage of these resulting in an award of *(a)* higher-rate care component, *(b)* middle-rate care component, *(c)* lower-rate care component, *(d)* higher-rate mobility component and *(e)* lower-rate mobility component; and how many were refused.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Widows

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a widow's payment available to women widowed prior to 11 April 1988.

Miss Widdecombe: We have no plans to do so. The widow's payment of £1,000 replaced the widow's allowance from 11 April 1988. To pay widow's payment to those widows who received widow's allowance prior to April 1988 would be double provision.

Benefits, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list each of the benefits for which his Department is responsible in the Doncaster area during the current year, giving in each case *(a)* the total number receiving the benefit and *(b)* the cost in a full year of that benefit; and if he will give comparative figures for (i) 24 months, (ii) 36 months and (iii) 48 months ago.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the Benefits Agency is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all those functions and areas in his Department and associated agencies that have been identified for market testing in the wake of the White Paper "Competing for Quality".

Miss Widdecombe: Discussions are presently taking place with the efficiency unit at the Cabinet Office regarding proposals put forward by the Department. An announcement will be made in due course.

Invalidity Benefit

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy that invalidity benefit should be payable up to the same age for men and women.

Mr. Scott: The age limits for invalidity benefit coincide with the age up to which people can earn increments to their retirement pensions. This is 64 for women and 69 for men.

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the differential rate of percentage increases of national insurance benefits, including invalidity benefit and retirement pensions and income support; and what assessment he has made of how many pensioners are worse off as a result of these differentials.

Miss Widdecombe: Our policy is to maintain the value in line with prices of retirement pension and other contributory benefits for people over state pension age. This April they received an increase in line with the retail prices index. Less well-off pensioners on income support received increases nearly 3 per cent. higher than this. All pensioners therefore benefited from the uprating.

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the rule that if claimants are in receipt of the higher rate of income support, because of a previous entitlement to invalidity benefit, and if they lose that right to income support because of a rise in invalidity benefit, their claim is deemed to be interrupted and they lose any entitlement to the higher rate of income support, even though the income support may rise and they may again be entitled to claim it.

Mr. Burt: A person who is in receipt of invalidity benefit and makes a claim for income support will be eligible for the disability premium or higher pensioner premium—depending on age—whether or not they have been entitled to income support and eligible for the premium in the past. The hon. Member may wish to write to me if she has an individual case in mind.

Social Fund

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will show the social fund budgets for all offices in the Leeds metropolitan district for grants and loans for each year since 1988 both at real prices and at 1992 prices showing the percentage increase or decrease on the 1988 allocation.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the

Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Claims (Processing)

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what investigations he has made of the causes of the length of time taken to process claims for attendance allowance and disability living allowance; and what plans he has to increase the funding of the Benefits Agency in order to reduce the time taken.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Maxwell Group

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what steps he proposes to take to keep the House informed of progress over the state of the Maxwell pension funds; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what target he has set for a timetable for the money removed from the Maxwell pension funds to be restored; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: It is not yet clear how much of the missing pension fund assets will eventually be recoverable by the trustees. We have established a special unit to work alongside trustees and others seeking to secure the return of assets, and the unit will do all it can to help speed up this process. We shall keep hon. Members fully informed of developments.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of households in Scotland are dependent on housing benefit; and how this has changed since the current system of housing benefit was introduced.

Mr. Burt: The most recent estimate, for May 1990, is that 28 per cent. of households in Scotland receive some of their income from housing benefit (rent rebates and allowances). The corresponding figures for 1988 and 1989 are 29 per cent. and 28 per cent. respectively.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

BBC World Service

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what basis his Department decides the languages and areas in which the BBC World Service should be funded to broadcast.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The languages and areas in which the BBC World Service broadcasts are regularly reviewed jointly by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the World Service in the light of foreign policy objectives. Decisions are based on the political significance of a country or region and the extent of British and wider western interests; the degree of openness in a society and of its people's access to objective news; the range of means available, besides broadcasting, to project Britain and British views; and in the case of existing language services, the size and profile of their audiences, their impact and influence, and their importance to bilateral relations.

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the reasons his Department has decided not to fund BBC World Service broadcasts in Japanese.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Following a joint FCO/BBC world service review of broadcasting output in 1990, it was agreed to increase output in Russian, Mandarin and Vietnamese, as well as English programmes to a number of regions, and to end broadcasts in Japanese and Malay for which audiences were small and declining. Both services ceased at the end of March 1991. World Service programmes in English continue to both areas.

United Nations

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current level of funding for the United Nations; by what date the United Kingdom was requested by the United Nations secretariat to pay dues to the United Nations for peacekeeping operations in 1992; on what date those dues were paid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Member states' contributions to the 1992 United Nations regular budget will total £593,179,000, of which the United Kingdom share will be £28,260,695.

We estimate that the United Kingdom's assessed contributions to the United Nations for current peacekeeping operations for the United Kingdom financial year 1992-93 will total £70 million. As at today's date we had been asked to pay $81,178,625 towards those costs, and had paid $41,660,134. The discrepancy between the two amounts arises from an assessment in respect of UNTAC—the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia—which we have received but which has not yet fallen due. We aim to make all our payments in accordance with United Nations financial regulation 5.4, which states: "contributions shall be considered due and payable within 30 days (of receipt of the Letter of Assessment)".

Bahrain

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Bahrain Government about human rights violations; and what meetings he has had with representatives of the Bahrain Government to discuss the treatment of political prisoners in Bahrain.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We keep a close watch on human rights issues world-wide and raise the subject with individual Governments when necessary. The Gulf states, including Bahrain, are well aware of the importance that we attach to the observance of international human rights standards throughout the world.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many certificates have been issued under section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am aware of none so far as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is concerned.

Entertainment Budget

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was his entertainment budget for 1991.

Mr. Goodlad: Expenditure by both wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on entertainment in financial year 1991-92 is estimated at £7,102,000.

That figure includes the grant in aid to the Government hospitality fund, which meets the cost of ministerial entertainment and guest-of-Government visits for all Government Departments, and the cost of other official entertainment by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and by diplomatic missions overseas.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all those functions and areas in his Department and associated agencies that have been identified for market testing in the wake of the White Paper "Competing for Quality".

Mr. Goodlad: We have considered a number of proposals for market testing arising from separate studies carried out on behalf of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Overseas Development Administration by Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte. A statement setting out areas of activity to be market-tested will be made once these proposals have been finalised.

Entry Applications

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the current lists of applicants in each of the queues for *(a)* settlement and *(b)* visits at (i) Bombay, (ii) Dacca, (iii) New Delhi, (iv) Islemat, (v) Karachi, (vi) Nairobi and (vii) Dar-es-Salaam.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As at 30 April 1992., the number of applicants in the queues were:

Settlement	*Q1*	*Q2*	*Q3*	*Q4*	*Total*
Bombay	0	305	393	219	917
Dhaka	324	1,490	205	315	2,334
New Delhi	0	310	260	115	685
Islamabad	23	1,326	236	647	2,232
Karachi	6	87	20	7	120

There are no queues in Nairobi or Dar-Es-Salaam.

Settlement queues are organised as follows:

Q1 Persons with a claim to the right of abode, dependent relatives over 70 years, or special compassionate cases.
Q2 All spouses, and all children under 18 years.
Q3 Fiancé(é)s and others applying for the first time for resettlement.
Q4 Re-applicants.

Visits

During periods of seasonally high demand applicants for visit visas in Islamabad requiring a full interview can expect to wait up to five days. Elsewhere they are dealt with on day of application.

EC Directives

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the title and subject matter of any directives or proposed directives from the European Community which have an impact on divorce law, abortion law, research on the human embryo, care of the dying, sexual consent, euthanasia, abortifacient drugs or related issues.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The only directives that have an impact upon any of these matters are provisions relating to abortifacient drugs, for which, as with other drugs, marketing and control are governed by a range of EC pharmaceutical directives. There are provisions in directive 65/65 EEC allowing member states to prohibit the marketing of abortifacient drugs under their own domestic laws if they wish.

Iraq

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress made by the United Nations special commission in Iraq in dismantling the Iraqi nuclear facilities at Ash Sharquat, Tarmiyah and Al-Atheer.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In the course of the eleventh and twelfth nuclear inspections, the United Nations special commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency made excellent progress in dismantling Iraqi nuclear facilities.

Details of the 11th inspection are contained in the *Official Report*, available in the House of Commons Library.

The report of the 12th inspection has not yet been published. When received, it will be placed in the Library of the House.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Glass Recycling

Mr. Cohen: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, how many bottles are used per annum in the precincts of the House; and what provision is made for glass recycling.

Mr. Beith: Bottle banking facilities, comprising two 1,100 litre capacity containers, are situated between Peers Court and State Officers Court. The containers are emptied daily by a contractor who sends the glass for recycling. Records are not kept of the total number of bottles used or disposed of each year.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what veal, other than that reared in Britain, is used by the House Catering Department.

Mr. Beith: The purchase of food and other consumables in the Refreshment Department is the responsibility of the Director of Catering Services, who will be glad to respond to any further inquiries from the hon. Gentleman.

EMPLOYMENT

Training

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training places have been available in the Easington constituency in the years 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information regarding the number of training places in Easington is not collected.

Since 1 October 1990, training in Easington has been the responsibility of County Durham training and enterprise council (TEC). At 29 March 1992, there were an estimated 4,400 people in training on youth training and an estimated 3,400 people in training on employment training in the County Durham TEC area.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 and 17-year-olds who are not in employment or education are not at present on youth training programmes in the Seaham and Peterlee areas.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the local careers service, which covers the Seaham and Peterlee areas, that there are currently 165 young people in the area who are registered with it as not in employment or education and who are not in youth training.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information she has on the skills being learned by employment training trainees.

Mr. McLoughlin: A range of management and evaluation information is collected by the Department about employment training (ET). Employment training is providing unemployed people with the skills necessary for them to get jobs in an increasingly competitive and challenging labour market.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what means she has to assess the quality of ET.

Mr. McLoughlin: Both nationally and locally the quality of ET is assessed through a number of different measures. These include the achievement of targets for positive outcomes and vocational qualifications; analysis of a range of performance indicators and other management information; and regular and ad hoc surveys and evaluation studies.

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement about vacant training in engineering places in Stockport because of the inability of the training and enterprise council to fund young people to take them up.

Mr. McLoughlin: Through youth training, 430 young people in the Stockport TEC area are being funded in engineering training. I am assured by the TEC that no other young people have expressed an interest in engineering training under youth training.

Pensioners

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people of state retirement pensionable age are in *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time employment in the Seaham and Peterlee area.

Mr. McLoughlin: The area most closely relating to Seaham and Peterlee for which data are available is the parliamentary constituency of Easington. The latest available figures are from the 1981 census of population. The number of people of state retirement pensionable age in the parliamentary constituency of Easington working full time in April 1981 was 158. Figures for part-time employment are not available. Figures for both full-time and part-time employees by age from the 1991 census of population are expected to be released by the end of October 1992.

Coal Mining

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her estimate of the number of jobs directly and indirectly dependent upon the present size of the coal mining industry.

Mr. McLoughlin: In March 1992, the latest date for which estimates are available, there were 66,500 employees in employment in the coal extraction and manufacture of solid fuels industries in Great Britain. Jobs indirectly dependent upon the size of the coal mining industry are classified to those industries in which they occur—for example, the production and distribution industries—and are not separately identified.

Unemployment

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the level of male unemployment in 1982 and at the latest available date in Alyn and Deeside.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information on the numbers claiming unemployment-related benefits for local areas such as parliamentary constituencies has only been available since June 1983.

In June 1983 there were 3,393 claimant unemployed men in the Alyn and Deeside parliamentary constituency. In April 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, the equivalent figure was 2,249.

These figures are on the unadjusted basis and are therefore affected by both seasonal influences and by changes in the coverage of the count.

Working Women

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she will list the members of the working group looking at women's opportunities in the workplace and beyond announced on 20 May.

Mr. McLoughlin: The first members are as follows:

Lady Howe	Chairman, Business in the Community's Women's Economic Development Team; Responsible for Opportunity 2000; Former Deputy Chairman Equal Opportunities Commission
Joanna Foster	Chairman, Equal Opportunities Commission.
Sue Slipman	Director, National Council for One Parent Families.
Baroness Denton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Department of Trade; Industry and Government Co-Chair, Women's National Commission.
Sue Rorstad	Chairman and Managing Director, Poppies UK Ltd.
Peter Davis	Chief Executive, Reed International plc.
Sheila Forbes	Group Personnel Director, Storehouse plc.
Kay Coleman	Chief Executive, Harvey and Co. (clothing) Ltd.

Graham Millar	Managing Director, Nestlé Rowntree.
Dr. Susan McRae	Senior Fellow, Policy Studies Institute.
Sir Bryan Nicholson	Chairman, Post Office; Chairman, National Council for Vocational Qualifications; Former Chairman, Manpower Services Commission.
Margaret Seymour	Managing Director, Seymour Swimming Pool Engineers accompaniment

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list all those functions and areas in her Department and associated agencies that have been identified for market testing in the wake of the White Paper "Competing for Quality".

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is still considering the proposals put forward by the Department. An announcement will be made shortly.

Sheep Dip

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she will publish the Health and Safety Executive's report "Sheep Dip 1990" by Dr. Carole Davidson and Mr. Brian Blatchford.

Mr. McLoughlin: A summary of the report is available and is in the Library. Further copies are available free of charge from the Health and Safety Executive's office at the National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh. The report itself is an internal working document and will not be published.

Health and Safety

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many prosecutions have been brought under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1976 and associated legislation in Scotland in each year from 1982 to 1991; and how many inspection days it is estimated were saved as a result of all proceedings being conducted by the Crown prosecution service.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of complaints brought by the procurator fiscal in the sheriff court in Scotland under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 and associated legislation by HSE's inspectorates and by local authorities for the period 1 January 1982 to 31 March 1991 is given in the table. The information required to estimate the figure requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, whether or not an inspector personally conducts proceedings, he or she has to prepare a case and may also appear as a witness.

Number of complaints initiated in Scotland by HSE inspectorates and local authorities 1982-91

	Factory and Agriculture	*Mines*[1]	*OS*	*NII*	*Railway*	*Local authority*	*Total*
1982	257	0	6	0	1	n/a	n/a
1983	283	0	4	0	0	n/a	n/a
1984	220	0	3	0	0	n/a	n/a
1985	300	0	9	0	1	57	367
1986 January/March	89	0	1	0	0	n/a	n/a
1986-87[2]	273	1	2	0	0	53	329
1987-88	225	2	1	1	3	36	267
1988-89	248	3	4	0	0	206	461
1989-90	360	2	2	0	0	86	450
1990-91	[3]253	0	7	0	1	50	311

Notes:
1. NII = Nuclear installations inspectorate.
2. OS = Offshore.

[1] Includes HSE quarries inspectorate until 1989-90.
[2] Years commencing 1 April from 1986-87 onwards.
[3] Includes HSE quarries inspectorate.

Earnings

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will show average earnings per week for *(a)* males, *(b)* females and *(c)* in total for (i) manual, (ii) non-manual and (iii) all both (1) with and without overtime and (2) for each region and for the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information for the regions of England and for Wales, Scotland and Great Britain can be found in tables 12, 13 and X5 of the new earnings survey report for 1991. Comparable information for Northern Ireland can be found in table 1 of the new earnings survey (Northern Ireland) report for 1991. Information on the numbers in the sample in each category, to produce combined estimates for the United Kingdom, is in table 24 of the Great Britain report and table 3 of the Northern Ireland report. Copies of both reports are available in the Library.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list, by standard classification, the categories of jobs which are not covered by wage councils and indicate *(a)* the number of people employed in these jobs both full and part-time and male and female and *(b)* the average weekly wage before and after overtime for employees in each of their jobs.

Mr. McLoughlin: I regret that the information requested is not available. The sectors covered by wages councils do not coincide with the categories used in the standard industrial classification (SIC) revised 1980, which is used to compile employment and earnings statistics. It is therefore not possible to identify those employees within SIC categories who are not covered by wages councils. The most recent comprehensive earnings data analysed by SICs are published in the new earnings survey 1991; and

the latest employment estimates are in the April and May 1991 issues of the *Employment Gazette*. Copies of these publications are in the Library.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 22 May, *Official Report*, column 336, if she will list those chairmen or women of training and enterprise councils who are no longer holding that office; for what length of time chairmen and women are *(a)* appointed and *(b)* expected to serve; if any of the ex-chairmen or women are no longer members of the councils' boards; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested on TEC chairmen who no longer hold that office is given in the table. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has set down criteria for the appointment of TEC chairmen in the TEC operating agreement.

The articles of association of each TEC also require them to make provision for the regular retirement and election or re-election of board chairmen. There is no present length of service prescribed for TEC chairmen. This is a matter for each TEC to decide.

Training and enterprise council	*Chairmen who have left post since the establishment of the TECs*	*Continuing as board member (Yes/No)*
AZTEC	Ed Holloway	No
Bedfordshire	Ian Dixon	No
Calderdale/Kirklees	Tony Gartland	Yes
CAMBSTEC	Leszek Jakubowski	No
Dorset	Peter Allsebrook	No
Greater Nottingham	Ian Maclean	No
Hampshire	Martyn Wylie	No
HAWTEC	David Hutchins	No
Hertfordshire	Tony Saint	Yes
Leeds	Sir Gordon Linacre	No
Manchester	Geoffrey Maddrell	No
METROTEC (Wigan)	Paul Sneddon	No
North Derbyshire	Roy Pelham	Yes
North Nottinghamshire	Anthony Darbyshire	No
North West London	Alan Coppin	Yes
QUALITEC (St. Helens)	John Gillespie	No
Rotherham	Ken Knaggs	No
Shropshire	David Houghton	Yes
South Derbyshire	Peter Burden	Yes
South Glamorgan	Roger Helliwell	Yes
Stockport and High Peak	Tom Weatherby	No
Teesside	Peter Kerr	Yes
Thames Valley Enterprise	Tim Evans	Yes
Wearside	Anthony Wood	Yes
West Wales	Peter Allen	No
Wovlerhampton	Roy Carver	Yes

Labour Statistics

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make it her policy to compile and release information on likely unemployment rates.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. Macro-economic forecasts are the responsibility of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. However, it has not been the policy of this or previous Governments to publish forecasts of unemployment.

DEFENCE

Army Air Corps

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *261*, which Army Air Corps regiment will be based at Dishforth, and as part of which divisional and brigade structure; and where the two Army Air Corps regiments to be attached to 24 Airmobile Brigade will be based.

Mr. Aitken: Final decisions on these matters have yet to be taken. On present plans, the Dishforth regiment will support the new 3 (UK) Division; and the two regiments attached to 24 Brigade will be deployed along with the rest of the brigade in East Anglia.

Laid-up Ships

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for defence where *(a)* HMS Courageous and *(b)* HMS Swiftsure are to be defuelled and subsequently laid up.

Mr. Aitken: HMS Courageous will be defuelled and stored afloat at Devonport. HMS Swiftsure has already been defuelled at Rosyth and is currently being prepared for storage afloat there.

Service Display Teams

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those service display teams currently in existence, showing the annual cost to defence funds of each team, the value and source of commercial sponsorship of each such display team, and the number of public engagements in the last full year of their operation.

Mr. Aitken: Details of established service display teams are contained in the table. Where costs are not shown, figures are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. In addition, individual service units may form their own local display teams, but information on these is also not held centrally. All service personnel associated with military display teams have operational roles. The commercial sponsors listed may provide financial or other assistance, for example, equipment or services. The value of such support is commercially confidential.

Established service display teams

Display team	*Public performances 1991*	*Full cost (FY91/92) £k*	*Commercial sponsors*
Royal Navy Historic Flight	26	28	Crane Fruehauf, Leyland DAF, BMW, Martin Dawes Meech & Co.
Royal Navy Helicopter Display Team (The Sharks)	42	139	Westland Helicopters, Fields Aviation, Smiths Industries, Pussers Rum, Securicor Carlton, Maxon Radios.
Royal Marines Parachute Display Team	100	300	None.

Display team	Public performances 1991	Full cost (FY91/92) £k	Commercial sponsors
Royal Navy Field Gun Crews (Devonport, Portsmouth and Fleet Air Arm)	50	470	Walls, Hogg Robinson, DML, Legal Protection Group, Taunton Cider.
Royal Signals Motor Cycle Display Team (The White Helmets)	87	—	Sealink, Ford, Leyland DAF, Dunlop.
Parachute Regiment Display Team (The Red Devils)	86	—	News International.
Army Air Corps Historic Flight	14	—	Lynx Removals.
Army Air Corp Helicopter Display Team (The Eagles)	36	—	None.
Household Cavalry Musical Ride	71	—	None.
Kings Troop Royal Horse Artillery Musical Ride	42	—	None.
Red Arrows	71	22,165	British Aerospace, Breitling, Land Rover, Total Oil, Cellnet, Budget Rent-A-Car.
Battle of Britain Memorial Flight	334 (see note 1)	909	Rover Cars, Aviation Leathercraft, Rolls Royce British Aerospace, Monarch Airlines, Wickenby Flying Club.
RAF Falcons Parachute Display Team	81	825	Minolta Cameras, Colab Photographic Processing, Samsonite Luggage, Sonic Communications, Direct Telecom Services, Air Care.
RAF Vulcan Display Flight	33	292	Nokia, Henderson Line Rental, Flypast Magazine
RAF Queen's Colour Squadron	56	986	None.
RAF Police Dog Demonstration Team	70	459	Spillers.

Note: Includes solo performances by individual Flight aircraft.

Croatia

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) of 20 May, *Official Report*, column *185*, which nation is providing *(a)* the helicopter evacuation assets and *(b)* ground wheeled or tracked transport for the United Kingdom armoured field ambulance in Croatia; and whether he offered to provide appropriate United Kingdom assets for these tasks.

Mr. Aitken: The United Nations is providing all helicopter evacuation assets. The United Kingdom is providing its own ground wheeled transport for the field ambulance unit. There is no requirement for tracked transport.

Guards Battalions

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *262*, if he will make a statement on the progress of his plans to provide a public duties increment for Guards battalions assigned to public duties, and on the future of the Tower Guard.

Mr. Aitken: We aim to ensure that following restructuring the Foot Guards have sufficient manpower to carry out their public duties both at the Tower of London and elsewhere.

Israel

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received upon the arms embargo against Israel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: None.

Nuclear Testing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has received from the United States Department of Energy regarding complaints made at the Department of Energy's public hearing held in Las Vegas on 14 November 1991 on the environmental and radioactive contamination caused by the continued testing of United Kingdom nuclear warheads at the Nevada test site.

Mr. Aitken: None.

Aircraft

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of all equipment belonging to the United Kingdom armed forces which has been loaned or hired back to the company which produced it for display at military exhibitions or other sales promotion purposes in the last five years.

Mr. Aitken: The information requested is not held centrally and could not be provided without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each type of aircraft, the numbers sold abroad in each of the last 10 years and to which country or region of the world.

Mr. Aitken: A breakdown of the total value of defence exports by geographical region between 1985 and 1990 is given in the "Statement of Defence Estimates 1991", volume 2, table 2.7. The full information which the hon. Member requests could not be released, as details of particular defence sales are frequently subject to confidentiality agreements at the request of the recipient Government.

Menwith Hill

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the agreements governing the use of Menwith Hill by the National Security Agency of the United States of America.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The use of Menwith Hill by the United States Department of Defence is subject to confidential arrangements between the United Kingdom and United States Government.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations have been held with British Telecom Ltd. regarding the extensions at Menwith Hill near Harrogate; what additional cables have been provided from Hunterstones tower; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has no knowledge of any consultation with British Telecom regarding extensions at Menwith Hill nor work to lay additional cables from Hunterstones tower to Menwith Hill.

RAF Wyton

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the size and description of accommodation at RAF Wyton, Cambridgeshire, to which the Support Management Group and logistics units may be relocated under present proposals.

Mr. Aitken: RAF Wyton offers 7,700 sq m of accommodation suitable for conversion to offices, together with all the normal support facilities expected of an established RAF station. In addition, Wyton can provide all the married and single accommodation which would be required by the support management group.

Army Apprentices

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the size and description of accommodation at the Army apprentices college, near Harrogate, that will be unused after the transfer of a junior leaders regiment to the college following the relocation of the Army apprentices.

Mr. Aitken: No accommodation at the Army apprentices college Harrogate will be unused following the relocation of the Army apprentices.

Model Tanks

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what security measures have been taken to protect his Department's model tanks used for target practice exercises by the Royal Air Force; how many such model tanks have been lost or stolen during exercises in Wales in the current year; and what is the cost of purchasing such tanks for his Department.

Mr. Aitken: During the current year a total of three inflatable tanks have been lost or stolen during exercises in Wales. The sites for the tanks are carefully chosen, with a view to minimising visibility from public places. It is not feasible individually to guard each tank. The total replacement value of the three items is £26,682.

Survival Clothing

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the survival time during winter months of aircrew wearing survival clothing and non-aircrew without service issue survival clothing, who, as the result of an accident, end up immersed in the North sea 20 to 50 miles east of the River Tay estuary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The survival of a person in the North sea depends on a number of factors, including the tolerance of the person concerned to the environment and the prevailing weather conditions.

In providing search and rescue cover, both the Department of Transport and Ministry of Defence assume a maximum survival time of two hours in the North sea. We do not make separate assessments of the effects of wearing specialist survival clothing.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the survival time during winter months of aircrew wearing survival clothing and non-aircrew without service issue survival clothing, who, as the result of an accident, are left stranded during winter months in the Grampian mountains of Tayside, Central or Grampian regions.

Mr. Aitken: The survival of a person in mountainous areas depends on a number of factors covering equipment, the tolerance of the person concerned to the environment, and the prevailing weather conditions.

It is assessed that the rescue of personnel on land needs to be accomplished, where possible, within four hours. No separate assessment is made for the effects of specialist clothing.

Helicopters

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the base facility for search and rescue helicopters at RAF Leuchars was designed to accommodate Sea King helicopters; and what was the contribution of NATO to its construction.

Mr. Aitken: The base facility at RAF Leuchars is of a standard SAR design capable of supporting a number of helicopter types, including Sea Kings. The original SAR facility was demolished to make way for other NATO dedicated facilities. NATO funded 97 per cent. of the construction costs of the current facility.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the time taken by a search and sea rescue helicopter to reach the position of an accident of incident in the North sea 20 to 50 miles east of the River Tay estuary following receipt of notification of the emergency, for aircraft based at either Lossiemouth, Kinloss, Leuchars, Bulmar or Prestwick; and how the flight time is affected by easterly gale force winds of 50 mph, 60 mph or 70 mph.

Mr. Aitken: After take-off, the time taken, in minutes, to reach the point 20 miles east of the River Tay estuary is:

Aircraft Base	*Still Air*	*Easterly Wind Speed (mph)*[1]		
		50	*60*	*70*
Lossiemouth	47	74	83	95
Kinloss	47	74	83	95
Leuchars	13	24	29	38

Aircraft Base	Still Air	Easterly Wind Speed (mph)[1]		
		50	60	70
Boulmer	38	38	38	38
Prestwick	55	86	97	111

[1] The highest hourly wind speed at RAF Leuchars since 1970 is 47 knots.

Time taken, in minutes, to reach the point 50 miles east of the River Tay estuary is:

Aircraft Base	Still Air	Easterly Wind Speed[1]		
		50	60	70
Lossiemouth	57	89	100	114
Kinloss	58	91	102	116
Leuchars	29	56	68	87
Boulmer	36	36	36	36
Prestwick	70	109	123	141

[1] The highest hourly wind speed recorded at RAF Leuchars since 1970 is 47 knots.

Any easterly wind will, of course, benefit the flight times for aircraft from Lossiemouth, Kinloss, Leuchars and Prestwick on their return journey.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the time taken by a search and sea rescue helicopter to reach the ski slopes of Glenshee following receipt of notification of an accident for helicopters based at either Lossiemouth, Kinloss, Leuchars, Boulmer or Prestwick; and how the flight time is affected by easterly gale force winds of 50 mph, 60 mph or 70 mph.

Mr. Aitken: Helicopter flight in mountainous regions during high winds is extremely hazardous and would be contemplated only in the most serious of circumstances.

After take-off, the time taken, in minutes to reach the ski slopes of Glenshee following notification of an incident is:

Aircraft Base	Still Air	Easterly Wind Speed[1]		
		50	60	70
Lossiemouth	28	28	28	28
Kinloss	27	27	27	27
Leuchars	20	16	16	15
Boulmer	62	49	48	46
Prestwick	62	68	73	78

[1] The highest hourly wind speed recorded at RAF Leuchars since 1970 is 47 knots.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he can give details of the number of rescue missions carried out by search and rescue helicopters during winter months in the Grampian mountains of Tayside, Central and Grampian regions during the last 10 years; and from which base the helicopters left to carry out the missions.

Mr. Aitken: It has not been possible to separate the Tayside region from the Central and Grampian regions. Information on rescues carried out before 1983 is unavailable.

Rescues carried out in the Central region from RAF Lossiemouth

Year	Total number of call-outs	Number of rescue operations undertaken	Number of people rescued
1983-84	1	1	1
1984-85	0	0	0
1985-86	0	0	0
1986-87	0	0	0
1987-88	0	0	0
1988-89	1	0	0
1989-90	1	0	0
1990-91	0	0	0
1991-92	1	0	0

Rescues carried out in the Central region from RAF Leuchars

Year	Total number of call-outs	Number of rescue operations undertaken	Number of people rescued
1983-84	5	3	4
1984-85	1	1	1
1985-86	3	1	1
1986-87	1	0	0
1987-88	1	1	1
1988-89	1	1	1
1989-90	3	0	0
1990-91	6	5	6
1991-92	6	2	2

Rescues carried out in the Central region from Prestwick:

Year	Total number of call-outs	Number of rescue operations undertaken	Number of people rescued
1983-84	3	3	3
1984-85	1	0	0
1985-86	0	0	0
1986-87	5	3	4
1987-88	2	1	1
1988-89	2	1	2
1989-90	7	2	3
1990-91	4	1	1
1991-92	4	0	0

No other SAR flights were involved in mountain rescue in the Central region.

Rescues carried out in the Grampian region from RAF Lossiemouth:

Year	Total number of call-outs	Number of rescue operations undertaken	Number of people rescued
1983-84	21	6	14
1984-85	11	6	9
1985-86	8	7	8
1986-87	13	8	10
1987-88	14	2	4
1988-89	13	6	12
1989-90	14	9	11
1990-91	22	9	12
1991-92	13	8	12

Rescues carried out in the Gramp[illegible]ion from RAF Leuchars:

Year	*Total number of call-outs*	*Number of rescue operations undertaken*	*Number of people rescued*
1983-84	17	7	17
1984-85	8	4	5
1985-86	6	5	5
1986-87	6	5	6
1987-88	3	0	0
1988-89	6	4	12
1989-90	7	1	2
1990-91	9	5	5
1991-92	8	5	6

In addition, the Royal Navy helicopters based at Prestwick undertook two rescue missions, saving three people in 1983-84.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many rescue missions were carried out by search and rescue helicopters during the winter months in the River Tax estuary, and in the North sea up to 100 miles east of the estuary, during the past 10 years; and if he will detail from which base the helicopters left to carry out the missions.

Mr. Aitken: The available information, which covers the periods October to March for the years 1983 to 1992, is as follows.

Year	*Total number of call-outs*	*Number of rescue operations undertaken*	*Number of people rescued*
1983-84	5	4	5
1984-85	8	7	19
1985-86	3	0	0
1986-87	2	1	1
1987-88	5	1	5
1988-89	5	2	3
1989-90	6	2	2
1990-91	4	1	1
1991-92	5	2	5

Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for defence if he will make a statement on the future of the Queen Elizabeth military hospital.

Mr. Aitken: Future requirements for medical support to the armed forces, including the provision of service hospitals, are being reviewed.

SCOTLAND

Quarrying

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state his policy toward the creation of coastal super-quarries in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: National planning guidelines on the working of aggregates were issued in 1977. These guidelines, which are still extant, acknowledge the economic potential of coastal super-quarry developments and suggest that they could, in principle, be acceptable if damage to the environment is minimised through careful choice of location and detailed site proposals. These guidelines, along with others, are under review in accordance with a commitment given in the Environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance" (Cm 1200). A draft national planning policy guideline on "Land for Mineral Working" is to be issued for consultation shortly.

Within the national policy framework it is important that development proposals are considered in the context of up-to-date development plans. These should be prepared by planning authorities in full consultation with the local community and should have regard to the economic needs and environmental considerations of their area. Where the planning authority considers that a development such as a coastal super-quarry is likely to have a significant environmental effect, a formal environmental assessment must be prepared, in accordance with Government guidance issued in 1988.

Hospital Beds

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the hospitals in Scotland which had consultant obstetric or general practitioner maternity beds in 1990-91, and give the number of each type in each hospital.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* The information requested is given in the table:

NHS hospitals in Scotland: Average available staffed beds in obstetrics by hospital at 31 March 1991.

Hospital	*Average available staffed beds*	
	Specialist obstetrics	*G obstetric*
Calton, Campbeltown	—	8
Dunoon and District General	—	8
Islay, Bowmore	—	3
Mid Argyll, Lochgilphead	—	3
Oban Maternity	—	6
Rankin Memorial, Greenock	38	—
Royal Alexandra, Paisley	70	—
Vale of Leven District General, Alexandria	33	—
Victoria, Rothesay	—	3
Ayrshire Central, Irvine	140	—
Davidson Cottage, Girvan	—	2
Isle of Arran War Memorial	—	4
Thornyflat Maternity, Ayr	—	18
Borders General, Melrose	35	—
Cresswell Maternity, Dumfries	45	—
Dalrymple, Stranraer	—	9
Dunfermline Maternity	37	—
Forth Park Maternity, Kirkcaldy	86	—
West Fife District General	7	—
Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary	53	—
Stirling Royal Infirmary	54	—
Aberdeen Maternity	112	—
Chalmers, Banff	—	10
Fraserburgh	—	8
Insch and District War Memorial	—	4
Jubilee, Huntly	—	7
Kincardine O'Neil, Torphins	—	9
Leanchoil, Forres	—	6
Maryhill Maternity, Elgin	—	13
Peterhead Cottage	—	10
Seafield, Buckie	—	6
Summerfield Mat, Aberdeen	30	—

Hospital	Average available staffed beds: Specialist obstetrics	Average available staffed beds: GP obstetrics
Turner Memorial, Keith	—	3
Glasgow Royal Maternity	92	—
Queen Mother's, Yorkhill	99	—
Rutherglen Maternity	82	—
Southern General, Glasgow	72	—
Stobhill General, Glasgow	46	—
Belford, Fort William	—	7
Caithness General, Wick	15	—
Mackinnon Memorial, Skye	—	1
Portree, Skye	—	1
Raigmore, Inverness	72	—
Town and County, Nairn	7	—
Bellshill Maternity	112	—
Wm. Smellie Mat, Lanark	50	—
Eastern General, Edinburgh	48	—
Simpson M. M. P., Edinburgh	125	—
St. John's, Livingston	50	—
Western General, Edinburgh	37	—
Balfour, Kirkwall	—	8
Gilbert Bain, Lerwick	—	10
Arbroath Infirmary	—	14
Blairgowrie Cottage	—	2
Fyfe Jamieson Mat, Forfar	—	10
Montrose Royal Infirmary	—	8
Ninewells, Dundee	98	—
Perth Royal Infirmary	42	—
Daliburgh, South Uist	—	3
Lewis, Stornoway	13	—

Local Government Finance

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the amount of aggregate external finance allocated to *(a)* the general revenue account and *(b)* the general services capital programme for each district council expressed in (i) real terms and (ii) on a per capita basis for each financial year since 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* Since 1990-91, local authority current expenditure has been supported by aggregate external finance (AEF) which consists of non-domestic rate income (NDRI), revenue support grant (RSG) and specific grants. The NDRI and RSG components are neither hypothecated to particular services nor to loan charges on these services arising from outstanding capital debt. The general services capital programme is not part of AEF.

The total AEF, since its introduction, for each district authority, in (i) real and (ii) per capita terms is given in the table.

	1990-91 AEF at 1990-91 prices £	1990-91 AEF per capita £	1991-92 AEF at 1990-91 prices £	1991-92 AEF per capita £	1992-93 AEF at 1990-91 prices £	1992-93 AEF per capita £
Berwickshire	1,243,000	65·86	1,746,010	92·38	1,794,929	94·12
Ettrick and Lauderdale	2,308,000	68·29	3,234,050	95·32	3,239,279	94·52
Roxburgh	2,750,000	78·44	3,578,449	102·56	3,507,579	100·25
Tweeddale	1,017,000	68·43	1,428,850	95·38	1,434,512	94·56
Clackmannan	4,105,000	87·02	5,577,150	118·24	5,959,844	125·55
Falkirk	12,063,000	84·24	14,958,604	104·55	15,881,590	110·85
Stirling	8,865,000	109·24	10,428,208	128·49	11,100,478	136·44
Annandale and Eskdale	2,246,000	61·68	3,056,249	84·10	3,076,510	84·10
Nithsdale	3,810,000	66·39	5,081,068	88·27	5,541,296	95·84
Stewartry	1,304,000	55·79	1,957,669	84·13	1,932,657	82·17
Wigtown	2,153,000	71·04	2,956,476	97·16	3,053,258	100·17
Dunfermline	10,103,000	78·04	13,129,575	101·13	13,974,869	107·57
Kirkcaldy	11,065,000	75·08	14,203,738	96·82	15,359,299	104·44
North East Fife	5,374,000	79·18	7,216,822	105·73	7,714,528	111·93
Aberdeen City	23,628,000	111·88	28,027,103	133·02	28,861,065	136·73
Banff and Buchan	6,545,000	78·19	8,171,228	96·82	8,523,007	100·25
Gordon	4,999,000	68·94	6,945,600	93·69	7,295,086	97·79
Kincardine and Deeside	3,495,000	71·46	4,398,350	88·28	4,668,426	91·68
Moray	6,399,000	75·22	8,154,754	96·56	9,055,136	107·19
Badenoch and Strathspey	766,000	70·88	1,108,785	101·91	1,049,949	93·83
Caithness	2,037,000	75·17	2,660,160	100·16	2,704,467	100·95
Inverness	4,630,000	74·98	5,779,947	92·85	5,799,759	91·93
Lochaber	1,894,000	98·75	2,444,587	127·92	2,385,190	125·34
Nairn	749,000	72·38	929,193	90·74	944,417	90·64
Ross and Cromarty	5,101,000	105·83	6,258,336	129·55	6,475,875	132·40
Skye and Lochalsh	1,160,000	101·44	1,811,497	156·30	1,832,491	155·03
Sutherland	1,577,000	120·86	1,645,496	126·97	1,709,073	130·96
East Lothain	7,095,000	85·76	9,648,832	114·69	10,310,781	120·62
Edinburgh City	48,336,000	111·51	63,089,374	145·64	67,194,920	154·64
Midlothian	6,852,000	84·24	8,032,777	99·45	8,792,201	108·13
West Lothian	10,994,000	76·54	14,477,036	99,98	16,137,370	108·82
Argyll and Bute	7,386,000	111·92	10,838,337	163·33	11,424,228	172·70
Bearsden and Milngavie	3,093,000	76·59	3,987,536	97·93	4,158,655	101·68
Clydebank	6,837,000	143·15	7,215,249	152·93	7,350,534	156·66
Clydesdale	4,834,000	82·88	6,326,764	108·26	6,696,776	114·36
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	4,892,000	78·29	5,900,728	93·92	6,329,204	100·30

	1990-91 AEF at 1990-91 prices £	1990-91 AEF per capita £	1991-92 AEF at 1990-91 prices £	1991-92 AEF per capita £	1992-93 AEF at 1990-91 prices £	1992-93 AEF per capita £
Cumnock and Doon Valley	3,770,000	87·46	4,679,439	108·80	4,916,156	114·25
Cunninghame	13,879,000	101·24	16,044,366	116·97	17,406,430	126·56
Dumbarton	7,115,000	88·53	8,254,136	103·31	9,115,950	114·31
East Kilbride	5,392,000	66·01	6,708,466	81·48	7,219,067	86·91
Eastwood	3,599,000	61·30	5,058,516	83·96	5,169,253	84·73
Glasgow City	132,331,000	188·19	138,058,582	198·47	139,244,287	202·03
Hamilton	9,402,000	87·87	11,639,279	108·51	12,351,652	115·91
Inverclyde	10,065,000	105·73	11,704,978	124·03	12,413,361	132·81
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	6,930,000	85·51	8,147,664	100·55	8,625,855	106·35
Kyle and Carrick	10,004,000	88·37	12,045,450	106·32	12,833,699	112·84
Monklands	11,038,000	105·31	13,815,041	131·95	14,998,882	143·58
Motherwell	14,422,000	98·25	17,398,097	118·56	18,872,244	128·59
Renfrew	19,221,000	95·91	23,980,193	119·56	25,310,558	125·90
Strathkelvin	8,015,000	89·86	9,669,953	108·14	9,706,211	108·26
Angus	6,977,000	73·58	9,156,916	96·31	9,579,216	100·44
Dundee City	19,571,000	112·31	24,749,550	143·44	26,241,560	151·81
Perth and Kinross	10,694,000	85·78	13,258,095	106·17	13,563,475	107·84

Note:
1. 1990-91 prices calculated using the GDP deflator.
2. AEF per capita calculated using the Registrar General for Scotland's mid-year estimates of total population.

Housing Statistics

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the number of non-tolerable houses and *(b)* the proportion that this represents of the total housing stock in terms of (i) council stock, (ii) Scottish Homes stock, (iii) housing association stock, (iv) private-rented stock and (v) owner-occupied stock in (1) Scotland, (2) Strathclyde region, (3) Renfrew district, (4) Paisley, (5) Johnstone and (6) Elderslie; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish a table showing his most recent estimate of *(a)* the amount and *(b)* the percentage of housing stock below tolerable standard in (i) Renfrew district, (ii) Strathclyde region and (iii) Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* The latest available estimates supplied by housing authorities of the number of dwellings below tolerable standard are given in the table. Information is held centrally only for Scotland as a whole, regions and districts.

Estimates for March 1991 and March 1992, based on a revised and improved annual return for housing authorities, will be published in the autumn.

Estimated number of dwellings below the tolerable standard—March 1990

	Scotland	Strathclyde	Renfrew
Total	80,993	48,518	1,110
Public authorities	22,561	21,922	171
Private sector and housing associations	46,547	17,359	939
of which:			
Housing associations	504	469	88
Private sector[1]	46,043	16,890	851
Ownership not known	11,885	9,237	0

BTS dwellings as a percentage of all dwellings by ownership[2]

	Scotland	Strathclyde	Renfrew
All dwellings	3·9	5·2	1·4
Public authorities[3]	2·4	4·4	0·4
Private sector and housing associations[3]	4·0	4·0	2·4

[1] Many authorities could not separately identify owner occupied from privately rented.
[2] Percentages based on number of domestic subjects on valuation roll at 31 March 1989.
[3] Percentages by ownership exclude those dwellings where ownership is unknown.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the *(a)* gross and *(b)* net capital allocation in outturn figures for local authority housing in each Scottish district council, expressed as a cost per dwelling unit; and if he will make a statement.

(2) if he will publish a table showing the *(a)* gross and *(b)* net housing revenue allocation in outturn figures for local authority housing in each district council, expressed as a cost per dwelling unit; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* The gross and net forecast capital expenditure outturn figures for 1991-92 on the HRA block for each district council in Scotland, expressed as a cost per council house are set out in the table. The figures include, where appropriate, expenditure in the four urban partnerships and also on the homelessness and energy efficiency projects for which we made available additional resources last year. Final outturn figures for 1991-92 are not available until later in the year.

Forecast housing capital outturn per local authority dwelling 1991-92

Authority	Forecast gross outturn £	Forecast net outturn £
Borders		
Berwickshire	413	36
Ettrick and Lauderdale	497	215
Roxburgh	708	410
Tweeddale	408	109

Authority	Forecast gross outturn £	Forecast net outturn £
Central		
Clackmannan	553	225
Falkirk	668	233
Stirling	784	313
Dumfries and Galloway		
Annandale and Eskdale	823	455
Nithsdale	743	417
Stewartry	859	408
Wigtown	841	496
Fife		
Dunfermline	603	211
Kirkcaldy	494	127
North East Fife	634	34
Grampian		
Aberdeen	465	166
Banff and Buchan	510	100
Gordon	1,300	775
Kincardine and Deeside	1,202	771
Moray	603	161
Highland		
Badenoch and Strathspey	1,388	860
Caithness	721	566
Inverness	896	491
Lochaber	1,231	727
Nairn	1,070	656
Ross and Cromarty	1,049	611
Skye and Lochalsh	2,268	1,731
Sutherland	1,200	777
Lothian		
East Lothian	669	109
Edinburgh	851	346
Midlothian	575	123
West Lothian	455	96
Strathclyde		
Argyll and Bute	711	179
Bearsden and Milngavie	843	152
Clydebank	762	261
Clydesdale	500	231
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	473	85
Cumnock and Doon Valley	325	113
Cunninghame	530	208
Dumbarton	778	488
East Kilbride	943	357
Eastwood	694	436
Glasgow	689	395
Hamilton	530	145
Inverclyde	480	271
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	514	220
Kyle and Carrick	514	130
Monklands	551	207
Motherwell	567	269
Renfrew	570	210
Strathkelvin	656	210
Tayside		
Angus	464	123
Dundee	610	215
Perth and Kinross	548	75
Islands areas		
Orkney	514	−1,176
Shetland	2,052	1,790
Western Isles	1,562	1,230

EC Funds

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing in cash and constant terms the amount of moneys allocated by the European Community to projects within Scotland from *(a)* the social fund, *(b)* the regional development fund, *(c)* RENAVAL, *(d)* RECHAR and *(e)* other EC funds in each year since 1987; if he will relate any moneys allocated to the Strathclyde integrated development operation to these figures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* The European Commission allocates moneys in ecu on a programme basis. Local partnership committees decide on the allocations of funds to projects within each programme. Each calendar year the Commission applies indexation or inflation rates to awards which are made at constant prices. The available information is set out in the table. There are other EC funds which are of benefit to Scotland but figures for these are not held centrally.

Constant prices—£ million

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	
ESF[1,2]	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	15·2	16·1	17·6	19·5	—
	—	—	—	10·4	11·0	12·0	13·9	[3]—
ERDF[1]	93·0	95·0	68·0	84·0	116·5	73·5	68·1	—
	—	33·8	46·4	49·0	53·7	50·0	44·5	[3]—
RENAVAL Strathclyde	[5]—	[5]—	[5]—	[5]—	[6]6·8	2·2	6·0	—
RENAVAL Fife	[5]—	[5]—	[5]—	[5]—	[6]0·2	1·2	0·9	—
RECHAR West	[5]—	[5]—	[5]—	[5]—	[6]1·5	1·3	0·5	
RECHAR East	[5]—	[5]—	[5]—	[5]—	[6]3·2	4·3	3·2	—
LEADER	[5]—	[5]—	[5]—	[5]—	[7]4·7	[7]—	[7]—	—
PERIFRA	[5]—	[5]—	[5]—	[5]—	[7]0·9	[7]—	[7]—	—
EAGGF	19·5	18·2	15·9	18·5	[8]21·9	[8]22·0	[8]19·8	—

[1] Scottish objective 2 and 5b programmes.
[2] Figures for objectives 3 and 4 could only be provided at disproportionate cost.
[3] Of which SIDO—Strathclyde Integrated Development Operation.
[4] Not available—ESF figures not held on a regional basis before 1990.
[5] Not applicable.
[6] 1990 and 1991 combined.

[7] Moneys allocated over the calendar years 1991-93 with no yearly split.
[8] Estimate by fiscal year.

Note: Figures provided are in constant terms; receipts will take account of the deflator, and exchange rate at the appropriate time.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on how the Scottish Office's interpretation and application of the additionality principle in relation to European funding has varied since 1987.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* There was no change in the Scottish Office policy towards additionality from 1987 until 17 February this year, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced that in future published expenditure plans would show forecast receipts separately for each expenditure progamme.

Water Rates

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing average water rates in Scotland in each year since 1979 in cash and constant prices.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 12 June 1992]:* Due to revisions in rateable values and in the method of water charging, water rates in Scotland cannot be compared over the period in question. However, the average household water bills and metered water charges are estimated as follows:

Year	*Average household water bill*		*Average metered water charge*	
	Cash prices (£ per year)	*1992 prices (£ per year)*	*Cash prices (pence per cubic metre)*	*1992 prices (pence per cubic metre)*
1979-80	15·4	37·9	8·3	20·5
1980-81	19·4	40·5	10·0	20·9
1981-82	25·6	47·7	11·9	22·1
1982-83	29·5	50·6	13·8	23·6
1983-84	27·8	45·6	13·8	22·6
1984-85	29·8	46·7	14·7	23·0
1985-86	32·8	48·3	15·3	22·5
1986-87	31·8	45·3	16·3	23·2
1987-88	36·6	50·0	17·2	23·5
1988-89	36·6	47·6	18·2	23·6
1989-90	38·2	46·1	28·4	34·4
1990-91	41·5	45·8	30·9	34·1
1991-92	50·9	53·1	35·0	36·5
1992-93	58·4	58·4	37·3	37·3

Until 1989, metered consumers also contributed through the public water rate.

Inverclyde Enterprise Zone

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what date the Inverclyde enterprise zone will cease to exist; what is the current estimate of jobs likely to be created before the expiry date of the zone; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The 10-year lifespan of the Inverclyde enterprise zone will end on 2 March 1999. At designation, we estimated 3,200 new jobs for the area and this has not changed.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the companies which established themselves within the Inverclyde enterprise zone since its inception; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The following companies are presently on the Inverclyde enterprise zone:

Cigna
Norma Scotland
Checkpoint Clothing
Riskend Readymix
Drummond Packaging
Anaplast
Ian's Grill and Takeaway
A1 Installations
Fairway Leisure
Tryrare Ltd.
The Sign Factory
Rae and Partners
Britannia Life
Massily Logan
C. R. Smith
Gravel Dry Dock Company
Mineba
East End Bakeries
Lost Wax Casting
S. and A. Seafoods
Auto Tec Lucas Ignition Centre
Puffer Holdings
Accurate Armour

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate the total number of jobs created in the Inverclyde enterprise zone since its inception; if he will break these down by way of managerial, clerical, supervisory, skilled manual, semi-skilled manual, unskilled manual and male and female employees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The total number of jobs in the Inverclyde enterprise zone is now 1,000. Information on the breakdown of these jobs into the categories requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only by approaching the individual firms in the zone.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions he has taken action against companies located in the Inverclyde enterprise zone because of serious reductions in employment; if this action involved the triggering of clawback arrangement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: It has not been necessary to take action against any company in the Inverclyde enterprise zone because they have suffered serious reductions in employment.

Employment Training

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of those on employment training in Scotland are on placement with *(a)* private employers, *(b)* local authorites or other public bodies and *(c)* voluntary organisations.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In Scotland responsibility for monitoring the delivery of employment training rests with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. I have asked the chairmen of these two bodies to write to the hon. Member with the information he has requested.

Inverpolly Estate, Wester Ross

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps are being taken to maintain the national nature reserve status of Inverpolly estate, Wester Ross; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* I understand that Scottish Natural Heritage is in discussion with the estate with a view to the re-establishment of a national nature reserve agreement for that part of the reserve within the estate's ownership. The original agreement expired in 1986 although a five-year extension was arranged. The area owned by the estate is also protected as a site of special scientific interest.

Scottish Co-operative Development Company

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of the Scottish Co-operative Development Company; what matters he expects to discuss; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* I plan to meet representatives of the Scottish Co-operatives Development Company Ltd. in the near future.

I discussed the company's general aims and objectives together with current projects including the co-operative proposed by the workers formerly employed by Armitage Shanks in Barrhead.

Under-fives Education

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the development of pre-five education in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* It is for local authorities to decide on the extent and nature of the pre-school education they provide having regard to available resources, local circumstances and competing priorities. The number of children attending local authority nursery schools in Scotland has risen from 31,700 in 1979 to 45,238 in 1991, an increase of 42 per cent. Over the same period local authority net current expenditure on nursery education increased from £12 million to £45 million.

Provision of pre-five education also extends to day care, which can be provided in a number of ways—at day nurseries, with child-minders or at play-groups. Day care provision has been growing steadily in recent years and, in recognition of this, in March this year the Government provided £0·5 million of special support for an initiative designed to improve the quality and educational content of day care services.

Scotland Europa

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the establishment of Scotland Europa; what is its annual budget; how many staff it is envisaged that it will employ *(a)* in Scotland, *(b)* in Strasbourg, *(c)* in Luxembourg, *(d)* in Brussels, *(e)* in London and *(f)* elsewhere in the financial years 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95; what aims and objectives he has set it; what measurement techniques and criteria he will use to assess its performance; how he will hold it accountable in the public interest; and what plans he has to develop the concept further.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* My right hon. Friend was delighted to be able to be present at the launch of Scotland Europa in Brussels on 26 May. Scotland Europa has been set up as a subsidiary of Scottish Enterprise to provide a representative centre for Scottish organisations in Brussels. Clients who use Scotland Europa's services will be able to obtain early and accurate information about developments in Community policies and to develop better access to the Commission and contacts within other member states. The benefits for Scotland will include a strengthening of Scottish involvement in Community programmes, and the raising of Scotland's profile as a region within Europe.

My right hon. Friend and I have been most impressed by the enthusiasm with which Scottish organisations both public and private have welcomed the initiative. This enthusiasm augurs well for Scotland Europa's future success.

Budgetary, staffing, monitoring and other administrative arrangements are matters for Scottish Enterprise, and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Arts and Broadcasting

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Scottish Office's relationship with the Department of National Heritage as regards the arts and broadcasting in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* The Secretary of State's responsibilities in the arts and broadcasting fields are not affected by the creation of the Department of National Heritage. He continues to be responsible for support of the cultural heritage of Scotland through his funding of the national institutions—the national galleries, library and museums of Scotland—the Scottish Museums Council, the Scottish Film Council and a number of Gaelic and other bodies. He is not responsible for support of the live and performing arts in Scotland; this function rests with the Secretary of State for the National Heritage. As regards broadcasting, the Secretary of State for Scotland's main responsibility is for the funding of Gaelic television. The Scottish Office will liaise with the Department of National Heritage in the same way as it did with the Departments previously responsible for the transferred functions.

Councillors' Allowances

Mr. McMasters: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the standard allowance payable to local authority members in each *(a)* district and *(b)* regional authority in Scotland and the amount of special responsibility allowance allocated to each authority.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* The Scottish Office environment department does not hold details of the allowances paid to individual local authority members. Each authority decides on its own arrangements within the requirements of the Local Authorities Etc. (Allowances) (Scotland) Regulations 1991 (as amended).

Steel

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the contacts between the Scottish Development Agency and the NUCOR Corporation relating to steel production in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 12 June 1992]:* Scottish Enterprise, replaced the Scottish development agency on 1 April 1991. My Department, in co-operation with Scottish Enterprise, remains in contact with NUCOR regarding its possible interest in locating in Scotland. The decision is one for NUCOR to take, but naturally we would welcome any proposals which would lead to the continuation of steelmaking in Scotland.

East Kilbride Development Corporation

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the individual property assets held by East Kilbride development corporation in the value range £250,000 to £4 million.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 8 June 1992]:* It would be inappropriate to disclose the information requested as it is commercially confidential.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 3 June, *Official Report*, columns *598-600*, if he will give the total 1992-93 budget for the Scottish Office for spending on advertising and other promotional material.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 12 June 1992]:* The allocation for expenditure on information publicity and other promotional material in 1992-93 is £3·7 million.

Youth Training

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many youth training places are available to unemployed youths in Kilmarnock and Loudoun constituency.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 12 June 1992]:* The information requested is not collected on a constituency basis. However, a special exercise conducted by Enterprise Ayrshire on 14 May 1992 identified 545 youth training vacancies in Ayrshire.

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many 16 and 17-year-olds are unemployed in Kilmarnock and Loudoun; and how many of them have been offered a youth training place.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 12 June 1992]:* In the area covered by the Strathclyde education authority careers office in Kilmarnock, which corresponds with the Kilmarnock and Loudoun district, there were 208 young people aged under 18 years registered as unemployed as at 9 April 1992, the latest date for which figures are available. Information about how many of these young people have either sought or been offered a youth training place is not available centrally. However, Enterprise Ayrshire has confirmed that the youth training guarantee is being met in its area.

Departmental Policies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who is the Minister responsible for considering the environmental implications of all of his Department's policies; when that person was appointed; what actions his Department has taken since the appointment of a responsible Minister; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Island Patients

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate his Department has made of the annual cost of introducing financial support for patients on non-doctored islands travelling to primary health care practitioners for treatment.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* The costs of introducing a scheme to cover the cost of travelling for treatment to primary health care practitioners would vary according to its range and coverage, £400,000 and £1,200,000 per annum. As my right hon. and learned Friend Lord Fraser of Carmylie stated in his letter of 6 May to the hon. Member, there is however no immediate prospect of introducing a financial support scheme of this sort.

Shellfish Farming

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sum of money has been made available by his Department to meet the costs of hygiene testing at or near shellfish farming sites in pursuance of EC directive 492.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* The testing and analysis of shellfish flesh to meet the classification requirements of EC directive 91/492 is being carried out by my Department's marine laboratory in Aberdeen. Additional resources have been provided to the laboratory for what constitutes the major part of the classification exercise. The collection and transmission of the necessary shellfish samples, which are being provided by the growers, is being carried out be environmental health authorities.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to make appointments to or dismissals from the board of Scottish Homes; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* The current term of appointment for five of the nine appointed Scottish Homes Board members expires on 31 March 1993. A sixth appointment will expire on 30 September 1993. Re-appointments or new appointments will be considered by my right hon. Friend in terms of the most effective mix of expertise required in the future by Scottish Homes.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 17 June 1992

HOME DEPARTMENT

Narayan Shankar

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make a decision on the application by Narayan Shankar for political asylum, August 1989, ref. S670769.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I expect the decision to be taken soon and I will inform the hon. Member at that time.

Wheel Clamps

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what instructions are issued to private companies authorised to clamp vehicles regarding any decision to fit a wheel clamp;

(2) what information he has on the degree of liaison between the Metropolitan police and private companies authorised to clamp vehicles in respect of prioritising illegally parked vehicles.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Under section 104 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, the decision to fit a wheel clamp to a vehicle may only be authorised by a police officer. Private companies are employed by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to carry out the physical task of applying wheel clamps and their operatives act on the instructions of a police officer.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a list of those private companies authorised by the Metropolitan police to clamp vehicles on public roads.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the information requested is as follows:

Parking Protection Limited
Highway Maintenance Service Limited

United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will next meet the general council of UKIAS.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I hope to meet members of the executive committee of UKIAS soon to discuss the organisation's future.

Crime, North Yorkshire

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* the text of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State's letter of 5 June to the hon. Member for York about recorded crimes in North Yorkshire.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have placed a copy of the letter in the Library.

Police Cells

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will give the average number of remand prisoners held in police cells in Cumbria over the last convenient period for each police station; how many police hours were spent looking after them; and at what cost to public funds.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: From 27 October 1991 to 25 January 1992, a daily average of 20 prisoners who normally would be held in prison were held in the following police stations in Cumbria:

Barrow-in-Furness
Carlisle
Kendal
Penrith
Whitehaven
Workington

Information is not available centrally on the numbers held in individual police stations over this period. The available information does not separately identify the number of prisoners held on remand.

During the same period, a total of 17,598 police hours were taken up with tasks relating to the custody and transport of prisoners who would normally be held in prison. The cost to the Prison Service of the police cells operation in Cumbria was £309,433·48.

Feltham Remand Centre (Suicides)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to prevent suicides at Feltham remand centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is already an active suicide prevention management group at Feltham. In addition, the governor recognises the widespread concern about recent deaths at the establishment and has chaired a special group to identify what more could be done.

The group is taking forward a range of initiatives, including a review of induction procedures and of measures to curb the incidence of bullying. Staff have been given refresher training in suicide prevention and a training pack has been produced for future use. Case conferences are held each week to manage prisoners identified as being at risk. A prison visitor scheme has been set up to support those who do not receive regular visits. Links have been made with the local branch of the Samaritans. The establishment is also continuing to develop its policy of encouraging regular contact between prisoners and their families, particularly where there is concern about the prisoner's welfare. In addition, a new unit is to open on 22 June with specially trained staff whose role will be to work to modify the behaviour of known bullies. Video cameras are also being installed in trouble spots to help staff to identify bullies.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to amend the law to bring the provisions concerning manslaughter into line with the protection given to the pre born against abortion after 24 weeks and the Still-Birth (Definition) Act 1992.

Mr. Jack: Although no suitable legislative vehicle is, at present, in prospect, we shall seek to amend the presumption in that Act to bring it into line with the

24-week limit now in the Abortion Act 1967 and with the Still-Birth (Definition) Act 1992 when a suitable opportunity arises.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give further consideration to the points made in the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection report on the London hospital medical college in October 1991; and if he will publish a full detailed response to each point.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The allegations in the BUAV's report were thoroughly investigated by the Home Office scientific procedures inspectorate and considered in detail by Home Office officials. A reply was sent to the general secretary of the BUAV on 17 March, and he has been invited to put any further specific questions to the Home Office in writing.

Turkish Refugees

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the outcome of his recent meetings about the hunger strike by the Turkish/Kurdish/Aleri refugees in London; what evidence he has of the after-effects of torture of former Turkish refugees living in London; what information he has about the treatment of their wives and children; what representations he has received about this matter; and what representations he has made to the Turkish authorities.

Mr. Charles Wardle: On 1 June we were informed that 54 of the original 62 hunger strikers had abandoned their protest. On 5 June we were informed that the remaining eight had taken the same step. Representations have been made in individual cases about the circumstances of Turkish refugees and asylum applicants with exceptional leave living in London and about their families remaining in Turkey. Applications for family reunion are considered in the light of the immigration rules and other published guidelines. My right hon. and learned Friend has had no contacts with the Turkish authorities on these matters.

Asylum

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reduce the time before an asylum seeker given exceptional leave to remain may apply to bring in his family and immediate dependants from four years to three years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. The period of four years reflects the view that family reunion for someone with exceptional leave should not normally be allowed until it is apparent that his stay in the United Kingdom is likely to be permanent.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of asylum seekers for each month from January 1990 until the present date.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information available is given in the table.

Applications received for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants

[1] *Number of principal applicants*

	[2] [3] *1990*	[4] *1991*	*1992*
January		4,455	2,165
February	3,360	3,445	1,420
March		3,885	1,595
April		5,275	1,440
May	3,665	3,805	1,370
June		3,000	[5]—
July		3,725	[5]—
August	6,980	3,340	[5]—
September		3,525	[5]—
October		4,375	[5]—
November	8,005	3,790	[5]—
December		2,210	[5]—
	22,000	44,840	[5]—

[1] Provisional figures, rounded to the nearest 5.

[2] 1990 figures may understate because of delays in recording. Reliable monthly estimates are not yet available.

[3] In addition, about 55 applications by nationals of Afghanistan to the British High Commission in New Delhi were processed locally.

[4] In addition, about 15 applications by nationals of Afghanistan to the British High Commission in New Delhi and 40 applications by nationals of Liberia to the British High Commission in Lagos were processed locally.

[5] Not yet available.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to ensure greater uniformity in practice about what constitutes urgent and compassionate grounds for family reunion in the cases of asylum seekers seeking exceptional leave to remain.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Compelling and compassionate grounds are considered in the light of the circumstances in each individual case. I am satisfied that decisions in such cases are properly taken.

Vandalism

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his policy to lessen vandalism in Wales.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* Vandalism in Wales is being most effectively addressed when organisations such as the Police, local authorities and other local agencies combine their efforts to develop practical preventive policies. It is such approaches which our policies seek to support.

Squatting

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he plans to introduce legislation on the squatting of residential property before the end of the current year;

(2) how many responses he has received to his consultation paper on squatting; whether he will list the name of each respondent; and whether he will state the number of respondents who were in favour or opposed to each of the four options consulted on.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* The Government are committed to strengthening the law against squatting and last year a consultation paper was published setting out various proposals. The responses to

this exercise raised a number of issues which require and are receiving careful consideration. It is not possible at this stage to say when legislative proposals will be brought forward. The Government wish to ensure that any new measure should be fair, easy to administer and be effective.

In all, we received 216 responses to the consultation paper. Analysis of the results shows that 133 responses —62 per cent.—were in favour of strengthening the law, 58 —27 per cent.—were opposed, and 25—11 per cent.—came to no clear conclusion. However, those respondents opposed to strengthening the law can generally be taken to have supported option A—leaving the criminal law unchanged; six respondents favoured option B—a limited extension of the law to certain types of squatting; 17 favoured option C—extending the criminal law to all squatting in residential premises; and 56 supported option D—a general extension of the criminal law to cover squatting in any premises.

Eighty four of the responses were from private individuals or companies, and we also received responses from the following public bodies, local authorities and organisation:

The Association of District Councils
The Association of Metropolitan Authorities
The London Boroughs Association
The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
The London Borough of Brent
The London Borough of Croydon
The London Borough of Greenwich
The London Borough of Hackney
The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Newham Borough Council
Tower Hamlets Borough Council
Wandsworth Borough Council
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
City of Bristol
City of Carlisle
Chester City Council
Exeter City Council
Swansea City Council
Cheshire County Council
Cumbria County Council
Gwent County Council
Oxfordshire County Council
Ashford Borough Council
Bournemouth Borough Council
Borough of Broxborne
Borough of Crewe and Nantwich
Dacorum Borough Council
Darlington Borough Council
Daventry Borough Council
Gillingham Borough Council
Guildford Borough Council
Hastings Borough Council
Borough of Luton
Medina Borough Council
Newport Borough Council
Scarborough Borough Council
Spelthorne Borough Council
Test Valley Borough Council
Wallingford Borough Council
Bridgenorth District Council
Carrick District Council
Fenland District Council
Hinkley and Bosworth District Council
Mid-Bedfordshire District Council
North Dorset District Council
North Kesteven District Council
North Norfolk District Council
North West Leicestershire District Council
Penwith District Council
Purbeck District Council
Rother District Council
South Cambridgeshire District Council
Vale of the White Horse District Council

Anstey Parish Council
Bagworth Parish Council
Burbage Parish Council
Carton Parish Council
Growby Parish Council
Nailstone Parish Council

Shelter
Squatters Action for Secure Homes (SQUASH)
Homeless Occupiers Project
Law Centres Federation
South Manchester Law Centre
Salford Law Centre
National Federation of Housing Associations
SHAC (The London Housing Aid Centre)
Housing Centre Trust
CHAS Housing Aid Centre (Huddersfield)
Hyson Green Squatters Support Group
Waterloo Action Centre
Blackwater Valley Homeless Forum
London Private Tenants Workers Group
Direct Action Group Housing
Housing Advice Response Unit
Eastern Housing Advice Group
Teenage Information Network
Housing Law Practitioners Association
Self-Help Community Housing Association Ltd. (Bristol).
National Housing Law Service
Action on Drugs, HIV and Homelessness
Lambeth Self Help Housing Association Ltd.
Lifeshare (Manchester)

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Department of Education and Science
Department of Trade and Industry
The Crown Estate
The Lord Chancellor's Department
The Crown Prosecution Service
The Legal Secretariat to the Law Offices
The Magistrates' Association
The Association of Chief Police Officers
The Metropolitan Police
The Police Superintendents Association of England and Wales
Office of the High Sheriff of the Counties of Greater London and Surrey
The Justices' Clerks' Society
The General Council of the Bar
The Chief Metropolitan Stipendiary Magistrate
The Law Society
Liberty
Justice
The Social and Liberal Democratic Lawyers Association
The Institute of Legal Executives
The National Association of Estate Agents
The Property Managers Association
The Confederation of British Industry
The British Property Federation
The Property Advisory Group
The County Landowners Association
The National Trust
The Church Commissioners
The Small Landlords Association
The British Retail Consortium
The Institute for Housing
The Council of Mortgage Lenders
The Institute of Rent Officers
The Association of Tenancy Relations Officers
The Newspaper Society
The Association of British Insurers
The Oxford Street Association
The Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers
The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
South London Women's Centre
Bournemouth Chamber of Commerce and Trade
Newham Chamber of Commerce
East Anglian Regional Health Authority

Portsmouth and South East Hampshire Health Authority
Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom
National Union of Students
Middlesex Polytechnic Students Union

In addition, one petition was received from the New Horizon youth centre containing 332 signatures opposing any change in the law.

Police

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of extra police posts that have been sought by each of the police authorities in Wales.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The four Welsh police authorities have made applications for increases in establishment for 1993-94, as follows:

	Posts
Dyfed-Powys	75
Gwent	37
North Wales	58
South Wales	44

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the established number of full-time officers in each of the police authorities in each of the past five years; and what measures he proposes to enable police authorities to place more policemen on the beat.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The authorised establishments for each police force in England and Wales for the period 1988-89 to 1992-93 are set out in the table.

The Home Secretary attaches importance to increasing the numbers of officers on the beat, but recognises that this is one of many needs. Measures recommended to forces to improve operational deployment include civilianisation, which has enabled the release of 5,700 officers; streamlining of organisational structures; shedding unnecessary middle management; improvement of technical support; and the introduction of flexible shifts.

Authorised Establishments

Force	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Avon and Somerset	3,050	3,070	3,081	3,085	3,087
Bedfordshire	1,030	1,046	1,085	1,117	1,178
Cambridgeshire	1,180	1,198	1,209	1,231	1,241
Cheshire	1,860	1,868	1,889	1,900	1,920
Cleveland	1,474	1,489	1,502	1,502	1,502
Cumbria	1,144	1,156	1,175	1,183	1,187
Derbyshire	1,793	1,793	1,812	1,825	1,850
Devon and Cornwall	2,827	2,846	2,865	2,880	2,928
Dorset	1,235	1,257	1,272	1,287	1,302
Durham	1,357	1,375	1,378	1,389	1,389
Dyfed Powys	935	935	944	944	969
Essex	2,762	2,804	2,875	2,892	2,950
Gloucestershire	1,164	1,164	1,164	1,183	1,184
Greater Manchester	6,943	6,988	7,021	7,057	7,077
Gwent	995	1,007	1,009	1,009	1,010
Hampshire	3,128	3,148	3,175	3,202	3,269
Hertfordshire	1,631	1,651	1,669	1,680	1,684
Humberside	1,972	1,992	2,007	2,025	2,034
Kent	2,941	2,968	3,020	3,054	[1]3,096
Lancashire	3,158	3,173	3,203	3,225	3,229
Leicestershire	1,733	1,760	1,814	1,827	1,853
Lincolnshire	1,183	1,183	1,198	1,206	1,206
Merseyside	4,679	4,701	4,701	4,706	4,706
Norfolk	1,338	1,362	1,409	1,421	1,446
Northamptonshire	1,106	1,121	1,142	1,167	1,190
Northumbria	3,483	3,514	3,560	3,586	3,613
North Wales	1,326	1,330	1,352	1,352	1,369
North Yorkshire	1,368	1,383	1,408	1,414	1,418
Nottinghamshire	2,294	2,318	2,344	2,344	2,344
South Wales	3,109	3,137	3,168	3,168	3,168
South Yorkshire	2,951	2,978	2,998	3,016	3,031
Staffordshire	2,166	2,188	2,203	2,211	2,215
South Wales	3,109	3,137	3,168	3,168	3,168
South Yorkshire	2,951	2,978	2,998	3,016	3,031
Staffordshire	2,166	2,188	2,203	2,211	2,215
Suffolk	1,186	1,186	1,205	1,216	1,233
Surrey	1,639	1,649	1,659	1,670	1,673
Sussex	2,923	2,940	2,964	2,982	3,014
Thames Valley	3,576	3,620	3,685	3,725	3,812
Warwickshire	981	992	1,008	1,016	1,020
West Mercia	1,963	1,991	2,024	2,024	2,053
West Midlands	6,754	6,830	6,895	6,958	6,977
West Yorkshire	5,227	5,259	5,281	5,295	5,295
Wiltshire	1,074	1,085	1,099	1,114	1,181
City of London	798	798	798	798	798
Metropolitan	28,115	28,415	28,412	28,322	28,322

[1] The establishment of Kent will increase to 3,136 from 1 January 1993 when reimbursed posts for the Channel Tunnel are introduced.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Children's Play and Recreation Unit

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to continue the developmental and strategic work done by the national children's play and recreation unit beyond the end of the unit's present guaranteed funding period on 31 March 1993.

Mr. Mellor: I am giving very careful consideration to what should happen when the national children's play and recreation unit's present funding comes to an end in March 1993 and I shall be announcing my conclusions at the earliest possible opportunity.

TRANSPORT

Airline Failures

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to establish a scheme to give financial protection for consumers in the event of the financial failure of an airline.

Mr. Norris: My predecessor announced in a written answer on 11 March that he proposed to introduce a scheme providing financial protection for passengers who book tickets on United Kingdom airlines, on the basis of a compensation fund to be financed by a small levy on United Kingdom airlines.

The Civil Aviation Authority has been asked to develop the details of a scheme, for which primary legislation will be needed, and it is currently working on proposals.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what meetings he has had with the International Air Transport Association agency programme joint council to discuss the concept of financial protection for airline passengers.

Mr. Norris: I myself have had no such meetings, but the Civil Aviation Authority's report on financial protection for scheduled passengers—CAP 595—published in August did take account of IATA's response to the consultation document issued by the authority and IATA's comments were recorded in the report.

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking following his responses to the recommendations on aircraft noise prepared by the noise review working party 1990.

Mr. Norris: The Government's responses to the recommendations on aircraft noise of the noise review working party were published in August 1991 as part of the consultation paper "Control of Aircraft Noise." We are considering the responses to this paper and our decisions will be announced in due course.

Rail Emergency

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with the chairman of British Rail the implication for contingency planning of the emergency which occurred between Hither Green and Grove Park stations on the evening of Tuesday 9 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that British Rail is holding an internal inquiry into the 9 June incident when an electrical sub station at Grove Park flooded and caused the track supply power to be cut off. British Rail is looking at how best to deal with similar electrical engineering difficulties in the future and also at what improvements can be made in keeping passengers better informed.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what compensation under the citizens charter will be made to the passengers trapped for four hours on a train between Hither Green and Grove Park stations on 9 June.

Mr. Freeman: Under the passengers charter, with effect from January 1993, monthly and longer season ticket holders will be able to claim discounts when they renew their tickets if, during the preceding 12 months, performance has been more than a small margin below the standards set in the charter. The delays caused by the flooding of the electrical sub station at Grove Park on 9 June will be included in the performance statistics used for this purpose.

Other ticket holders who were delayed can make claims immediately.

London Transport Board

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the members of the London Transport Board with their functions and their remuneration.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is as follows:

Member/Responsibilities	*Current annual salary* £
Executive Members	
Mr. Wilfrid Newton CBE	106,500
Chairman and Chief Executive of LT Board	
Chairman of:	
London Undergroud Ltd	
Corporate Strategy Group	
Executive Committee	
Design Policy Committee	
Mr. Anthony Sheppeck	76,150
Board Member for Finance	
Member of:	
Audit Committee	
Corporate Strategy Group	
Executive Committee	
London Transport Property	
Non-Executive Director:	
London Underground Ltd	
Non-Executive Members	
Sir Neil Shields MC	28,000
Deputy Chairman of LT	
Chairman of:	
LT Property Board	
Member of:	
Remuneration Committee	
Design Policy Committee	
Sir Alan Bailey	8,790
Board Member with special interest in passengers with disabilities	

Member/Responsibilities	*Current annual salary* £
Mr. Keith Brown Chairman of: Audit Committee Member of: Bus Privatisation Committee	8,790
Mr. J. Keith Davies Member of: Safety Audit Committee	8,790
Dr. Stephen Glaister Member of: Corporate Strategy Group Fares Revenue Committee Bus Privatisation Committee Tendered Bus Division Non-Executive Director: Victoria Coach Station	9,960
Mrs. Helen Robinson Member of: Design Policy Committee Remuneration Committee	8,790
Mr. Oscar Roith Board Member with special interest in safety Chairman of: Safety Audit Committee	29,290
Mr. Roy Thomas Member of: Audit Committee Remuneration Committee Bus Privatisation Committee	8,790
Mr. David Thompson Chairman of London Buses Ltd Member of: Audit Committee London Transport Property	8,790

Total emoluments, including salaries, fees, pensions and other benefits received by members of the board are published each year in London Transport's annual report and accounts.

Regional Airlines

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to take forward the recommendations of the Civil Aviation Authority that consideration be given to safeguarding slots at Heathrow for regional airlines within the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The authority has made no such recommendation.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he had with professional railwaymen or their associates, or those of civil engineers, prior to drawing up his specification for the proposed London to Kent fast rail link; and what estimate he has made of the capital saving available from his specification compared to a three or four-line scheme, respectively.

Mr. Freeman: The paper "Channel Tunnel Rail Link: Design Standards Brief", circulated on 21 May 1992, was prepared after consultation with British Rail, which also took independent engineering advice. British Rail estimates that the additional cost of four tracks, compared to the proposal for a two-track line with a freight capability outlined in that paper, would be of the order of £2 billion. A three-track scheme is unlikely to have much practical advantage over two tracks with passing loops, and no cost estimates have been made of that option.

Bus Deregulation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, as part of his plans for privatisation and deregulation of the buses in London he will prohibit London Buses Ltd. or any of its subsidiary companies from disposing of property that could be a major asset to any future competitor.

Mr. Norris: No.

Pollution

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to reduce the levels of pollution which are currently forecast to result from the increase in road traffic.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Government are to introduce into United Kingdom law two new EC directives prescribing stricter limits on emissions of gaseous pollutants and particulate matter from motor vehicles. Both directives will help to put the United Kingdom and its EC partners on a course for substantial longer-term progress in improving the quality of air in our towns and cities. The United Kingdom is also working with other member states with a view to limiting emissions of carbon dioxide from motor vehicles.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Immigration Appeal Tribunal

Mr. Madden: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what budget exists for independent legal representation for the immigration appeal tribunal; and how many independent solicitors have been retained by the IAT in each of the last three years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There is no separate budget for legal representation for the immigration appeal tribunal, IAT; any such fees are paid out of the general budget for the Lord Chancellor's Department. The IAT has been represented by the Treasury Solicitor when representation has been necessary in the last three years.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will show in league order the income tax thresholds in each member state of the European Community with the lowest at the end.

Mr. Dorrell: Estimates based on the latest available information are given in the table. Unless otherwise stated the figures relate to 1992.

The threshold is the amount of gross income below which no tax is payable.

Thresholds given relate to a single person, and to income from employment only. Standard deductions available to all employees have been taken into account.

Using the exchange rates published in the *Financial Times* on 16 June 1992 the league order is as follows:

Country	Threshold £
France	6,445
Luxembourg	5,739
Spain	4,294
Belgium	4,190
Greece	3,752
United Kingdom	3,445
Italy	3,421
Germany	3,244
Ireland	3,206
Denmark	2,895
Portugal	2,167
Netherlands	1,461

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state in pounds sterling how much would be deducted in income tax from *(a)* a single person and *(b)* a married couple if their overall income was equivalent to (i) £100 per week, and (ii) £200 per week in each member state of the European Community.

Mr. Dorrell: Estimates based on the latest available information are given in the table. Unless otherwise stated, the figures relate to 1992.

All amounts given in the table relate to weekly income and tax due and to income from employment only. For married couples it has been assumed that only one spouse is in employment and that the couple have no children.

Social security contributions are not included in the table, but have been taken into account in calculating tax due where there is tax relief for such contributions. In some countries, social security contributions will be much more significant than income tax for people at these levels of earnings. Using the exchange rates published in the *Financial Times* on 16 June 1992 the information is as follows:

Tax due on earnings (£/week)

			weekly earnings	
Country	*Single person*		*Married couple*	
	£100	*£200*	*£100*	*£200*
Belgium	7·31	47·88	3·62	28·63
Denmark	48·40	122·82	23·44	97·86
France	nil	19·95	nil	7·74
Germany	10·59	9·24	3·26	6·35
Greece	nil	2·37	nil	0·81
Ireland	14·27	50·06	nil	33·72
Italy	6·57	34·17	0·30	27·91
Luxembourg	nil	17·56	nil	2·32
Netherlands	11·65	26·28	7·67	22·31
Portugal	1·53	5·27	0·46	4·19
Spain	2·18	26·02	nil	15·99
United Kingdom	6·75	31·51	0·13	23·25

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the direct and indirect tax burden in 1978-79 and in 1992-93 as a proportion of gross earnings for *(a)* a single person, *(b)* a married couple both working, *(c)* a married couple with one partner working, *(d)* a married couple with two children, one partner working and *(e)* a married couple with two children, both working at 50 per cent., 100 per cent., 150 per cent., 200 per cent., 500 per cent. and 1,000 per cent. of earnings.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* The requested figures for 1978-79 and latest estimates for 1992-93 are given in the table.

Income Tax, NICs and indirect Tax payments at multiples of average earnings, 1978-79—percentages of gross earnings

	Multiples of Average Earnings					
	0·5	*1*	*1·5*	*2*	*5*	*10*
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
(a) Single person						
Income Tax	17·0	25·0	27·7	29·5	50·5	66·6
NICs	6·5	6·5	5·6	4·2	1·7	0·8
Total income tax and NICs	23·6	31·5	33·3	33·7	52·2	67·5
VAT	—	2·7	2·8	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·2	7·5	—	—	—
Total excluding Domestic Rates	—	42·5	43·7	—	—	—
Domestic Rates	—	3·1	2·8	—	—	—
Total	—	45·6	46·5	—	—	—
(b) Married couple, both partners working						
Income Tax	0·0	13·3	19·9	23·1	33·5	50·9
NICs	6·5	6·5	6·5	6·5	3·4	1·7
Total income tax and NICs	6·5	19·8	26·4	29·6	36·8	52·6
VAT	—	3·1	3·1	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	10·4	8·7	—	—	—
Total excluding Domestic Rates	—	33·2	38·2	—	—	—
Domestic Rates	—	3·4	2·5	—	—	—
Total	—	36·6	40·7	—	—	—
(c) Married couple, one partner working						
Income Tax	9·5	21·3	25·2	27·2	48·8	65·7
NICs	6·5	6·5	5·6	4·2	1·7	0·8
Total income tax and NICs	16·0	27·8	30·8	31·4	50·5	66·5
VAT	—	2·6	2·8	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	9·3	8·3	—	—	—
Total excluding Domestic Rates	—	39·7	41·9	—	—	—
Domestic Rates	—	3·0	2·5	—	—	—
Total	—	42·6	44·4	—	—	—
(d) Married couple with two children, one partner working						
Income Tax	−4·1	14·4	20·6	23·7	47·1	64·8
NICs	6·5	6·5	5·6	4·2	1·7	0·8
Total income tax and NICs	2·5	20·9	26·2	27·9	48·8	65·6

	Multiples of Average Earnings					
	0·5	*1*	*1·5*	*2*	*5*	*10*
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
VAT	—	2·7	2·7	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·7	7·3	—	—	—
Total excluding Domestic Rates	—	32·2	36·2	—	—	—
Domestic Rates	—	3·0	2·7	—	—	—
Total	—	35·3	38·9	—	—	—
(e) Married couple with two children, both partners working						
Income Tax	−11·1	6·4	15·3	19·7	31·9	50·0
NICs	6·5	6·5	6·5	6·5	3·4	1·7
Total income tax and NICs	−4·6	12·9	21·8	26·2	35·2	51·7
VAT	—	3·4	3·4	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	11·0	9·1	—	—	—
Total excluding Domestic Rates	—	27·3	34·3	—	—	—
Domestic Rates	—	3·5	2·6	—	—	—
Total	—	30·8	36·9	—	—	—

Income Tax, NICs and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings, 1992-93—percentages of gross earnings

	Multiples of Average Earnings					
	0·5	*1*	*1·5*	*2*	*5*	*10*
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
(a) Single person						
Income Tax	14·5	19·7	21·6	26·2	34·5	37·2
NICs	6·8	7·9	6·2	4·7	1·9	0·9
Total income tax and NICs	21·3	27·7	27·9	30·9	36·4	38·2
VAT	—	5·8	6·0	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	6·9	6·5	—	—	—
Total excluding Community Charge	—	40·4	40·3	—	—	—
(b) Married couple, both partners working						
Income Tax	1·1	12·1	16·4	18·6	28·2	34·1
NICs	4·7	6·8	7·6	7·7	3·7	1·9
Total income tax and NICs	5·8	19·0	24·0	26·3	32·0	36·0
VAT	—	6·4	6·6	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·3	7·1	—	—	—
Total excluding Community Charge	—	33·7	37·7	—	—	—
(c) Married couple, one partner working						
Income Tax	9·8	17·4	19·9	24·3	33·7	36·9
NICs	6·8	7·9	6·2	4·7	1·9	0·9
Total income tax and NICs	16·6	25·3	26·1	29·0	35·6	37·8
VAT	—	5·6	6·1	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·6	7·0	—	—	—
Total excluding Community Charge	—	38·5	39·2	—	—	—
(d) Married couple with two children, one partner working						
Income Tax	−0·1	12·4	16·6	21·9	32·7	36·4
NICs	6·8	7·9	6·2	4·7	1·9	0·9
Total income tax and NICs	6·7	20·4	22·8	26·5	34·6	37·3
VAT	—	5·8	6·5	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·2	6·3	—	—	—
Total excluding Community Charge	—	33·4	35·7	—	—	—
(e) Married couple with two children, both partners working						
Income Tax	−8·8	7·2	13·1	16·1	27·2	33·6
NICs	4·7	6·8	7·6	7·7	3·7	1·9
Total income tax and NICs	−4·1	14·0	20·7	23·8	31·0	35·5
VAT	—	6·9	6·9	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·7	7·3	—	—	—
Total excluding Community Charge	—	29·6	34·9	—	—	—

Notes to Tables

1. Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the households receive no tax reliefs other than the standard allowances and only have income from employment. All earners, including wives, are assumed to pay class 1 NI contributions at the contracted-in rate.

2. Since 1990-91, husbands and wives have been taxed independently. Previously the tax liability of couples depended on their joint income. To permit comparisons with earlier years, the table therefore shows income tax and national insurance contributions paid by a married couple as a proportion of their joint income, assuming, as in the earlier years, that where both partners are earners, the husband and wife share the relevant multiple of earnings in the ratio 60:40.

3. In order to provide comparability with 1978-79, when support for children was given partly through child tax allowance, child benefit is treated as a negative income tax for the married couples with two children. The figures for 1978-79 assume that both children are aged younger than 11 years.

4. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. These are estimated to be £329·90 per week in 1991-92 and £351·40 per week in 1992-93, using the Government Actuary's Department's assumption of 6¼ per cent. growth in whole economy underlying earnings over 1991-92.

5. The estimates of indirect taxes are based on equations derived from the 1985 family expenditure survey, uprated to

later years using forecasts of aggregate tax receipts. They are based on the illustrative assumption that 10 per cent. of disposable income is saved. There are wide variations in spending patterns between households with the same composition and similar incomes and estimated payments of VAT and other indirect taxes are therefore approximate, even within the income range for which figures are shown. Outside this range, the margin of error is even higher and reliable estimates cannot be made. Because of sampling variations, there can be substantial differences between estimates obtained from family expenditure surveys for different years. 6. It has not been possible to make satisfactory estimates of the burden of the 1992-93 community charge in the absence of sample survey results, which would enable actual payments net of adjustments arising from the community charge reduction scheme and community charge benefit to be related to earnings.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the change in taxation per individual arising from each relevant component of the 1992 Budget, both at current prices and net of indexation, for those at one half and three-quarters of average earnings, average earnings, and one-and-a-half, two, five and 10 times average earnings; and if he will provide comparable figures for each budget since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* Individuals will be affected directly or indirectly by most Budget measures. Changes in individual tax burdens will depend not simply on the level of income of the individual in question but also on their specific circumstances. It is therefore not possible to provide an assessment of the impact of the measures contained in the 1992 Budget, or in previous Budgets, in the form requested.

Vehicle Tax

Mr. Alton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the percentage increases in vehicle excise duty on *(a)* motorcycles under 250 cc, *(b)* motorcycles over 250 cc and *(c)* cars in each of the past five years, and the average income from fuel duty by (i) motorcycles and (ii) private cars expressed as a percentage of the vehicle excise duty payable; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The real percentage increases in vehicle excise duty applied in each of the last five budgets are shown in the table. It is estimated that the average amount of duty paid on fuel consumed by a motorcycle in 1992-93, is about 225 per cent. of the applicable rate of vehicle excise duty. The corresponding estimate for cars and light goods vehicles is 340 per cent. Estimates for private cars are not separately available.

Annual percentage increase in VED rate for:

	Motorcycles under 250 cc	*Motorcycles over 250cc*	*Cars*
1988-89	0	0	0
1989-90	0	0	0
1990-91	0	0	0
1991-92	50	25	0
1992-93	0	0	10

Inflation

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is Britain's retail price inflation rate; and what is the EC average.

Mr. Nelson: The inflation rate in the United Kingdom, as measured by the retail prices index compared with a year earlier, stood at 4·3 per cent. in May this year. The corresponding figure for the EC in April, the latest month for which information is available, was provisionally 4·8 per cent.

Labour Costs

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how he expects labour costs to adjust, within the framework of the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Nelson: Membership of the exchange rate mechanism will contribute to achieving the Government's objective of defeating inflation on a lasting basis. Within this framework the growth of United Kingdom unit labour costs is forecast to continue to fall as nominal earnings growth slows and productivity picks up.

Premium Bonds

Ms. Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will supply figures for the number of purchases of premium bonds for each calendar year since 1979.

Mr. Nelson: The number of purchases of premium bonds, for each calendar year from 1979 to date, has been as follows:

Year	*(000s)*
1979	4,463·1
1980	4,103·1
1981	3,674·1
1982	3,298·3
1983	3,499·5
1984	3,328·6
1985	2,530·0
1986	1,949·8
1987	1,962·0
1988	2,036·7
1989	1,418·0
1990	639·5
1991	727·4
1992	[1]391·7

[1] January to May: provisional.

Unemployment

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what priority unemployment levels take within the economic strategies of the Government.

Mr. Nelson: The object of the Government's economic strategy is to secure permanently low inflation and a healthy supply side. This is the only way to ensure sustained increases in employment.

Financial Regulation

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the regulations which govern the publication of reports by the Securities and Investments Board and the self-regulatory bodies; and if he will make a statement on policy regarding publication.

Mr. Nelson: The publication by the SIB and the self regulating organisations of reports is a matter for the bodies concerned. My officials are discussing with the SIB the scope of its ability to publish reports within the powers transferred to it under the Financial Services Act.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the executive agencies that have sought Treasury approval for the introduction of an agency-specific pay system, separate to the national civil service structure.

Mr. Dorrell: The following executive agencies have had approval to introduce a specific pay system for some or all of their staff:

Agricultural Development Advisory Service
Her Majesty's Stationery Office
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre
Royal Mint

A number of other agencies are considering changes to their pay and grading systems.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those executive agencies that operate for which the Treasury has approved a group bonus scheme.

Mr. Dorrell: The following executive agencies operate a group bonus scheme:

Central Office of Information
Companies House
Directorate—General of Defence Accounts
Driving Standards Agency
Forensic Science Service
Laboratory of the Government Chemist
Meteorological Office
Radiocommunications Agency
Royal Mint
Vehicle Certification Agency
Vehicle Inspectorate

Maxwell Group

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation report into the Maxwell affair as soon as he receives it and on any consequential changes that may be required to the Financial Services Act 1986.

Mr. Nelson: I shall study IMRO's review and the SIB's assessment of it carefully and consider whether any changes in the Financial Services Act regime are needed.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total value of providing mortgage interest tax relief for each year since 1979 inclusive for *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England, *(c)* Wales, *(d)* Northern Ireland, *(e)* the English regions and *(f)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is given in the table. Estimates of the regional distribution of mortgage interest for the years 1979-80 to 1982-83 have been derived from the results of the survey of personal incomes. However, following the introduction of MIRAS in April 1983, regional information cannot be extracted from Inland Revenue records. Broad estimates for the years 1983-84 to 1991-92 have accordingly been based on analyses of the family expenditure surveys for the years concerned.

Cost of mortgage interest relief (£ million)

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*[1]	*1991-92*[1 2]
Northern	60	80	70	95	100	140	180	200	210	250	310	350	310
Yorkshire	110	155	150	160	210	260	340	350	360	370	460	510	450
North West	135	200	180	215	260	330	440	490	510	530	690	770	640
East Midlands	85	115	110	130	180	230	300	320	330	340	430	480	410
West Midlands	145	160	190	170	230	280	370	350	360	430	550	620	510
East Anglia	45	50	60	75	90	130	170	170	180	220	270	300	250
Greater London	235	280	290	260	400	500	670	620	650	780	980	1,100	710
Other South East	375	555	600	650	740	950	1,270	1,220	1,260	1,350	1,750	1,940	1,510
South West	110	140	170	140	230	300	400	380	400	520	660	730	570
England	1,300	1,735	1,820	1,900	2,440	3,120	4,140	4,100	4,260	4,790	6,100	6,800	5,360
Wales	45	65	80	80	110	150	200	210	220	180	240	270	230
Scotland	85	125	120	140	190	260	350	300	310	370	470	530	420
Northern Ireland	20	35	30	30	40	50	60	60	60	60	90	100	90
United Kingdom	1,450	1,960	2,050	2,150	2,780	3,580	4,750	4,670	4,850	5,400	6,900	7,700	6,100

[1] Provisional.
[2] Higher rate relief was abolished in 1991-92.

Public Expenditure

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the total public expenditure on *(a)* total social services, *(b)* education, *(c)* housing, *(d)* social security and *(e)* care services expressed (i) in cash terms and (ii) as a percentage of gross domestic product for each year since 1975.

Mr. Portillo: Information on general Government expenditure by function in the period 1978-79 to 1991-92 in cash terms is given in table 2.2 of the "Statistical Supplement to the 1991 Autumn Statement", Cm. 1920. This information is shown as a percentage of gross domestic product in the table. Corresponding data for earlier years are not available on a consistent basis.

General government expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product, by function 1978–79 to 1991–92[1]

	1978-79 Outturn	*1979-80 Outturn*	*1980-81 Outturn*	*1981-82 Outturn*	*1982-83 Outturn*	*1983-84 Outturn*	*1984-85 Outturn*	*1985-86 Outturn*	*1986-87 Outturn*	*1987-88 Outturn*	*1988-89 Outturn*	*1989-90 Outturn*	*1990-91 Outturn*	*1991-92 Estimated outturn*
Defence	4·4	4·5	4·8	4·9	5·1	5·1	5·3	5·0	4·7	4·4	4·0	4·0	3·9	3·9
Overseas services, including overseas aid	0·6	0·6	0·6	0·6	0·5	0·6	0·5	0·5	0·5	0·5	0·5	0·5	0·5	0·5
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	0·6	0·6	0·7	0·6	0·8	0·8	0·7	0·8	0·6	0·6	0·5	0·4	0·5	0·5

	1978-79 Outturn	1979-80 Outturn	1980-81 Outturn	1981-82 Outturn	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Outturn	1988-89 Outturn	1989-90 Outturn	1990-91 Outturn	1991-92 Estimated outturn
Trade, industry, energy and employment	2·4	2·0	2·1	2·4	2·9	2·4	2·5	2·3	2·2	1·6	1·7	1·5	1·3	1·2
Of which: Employment and training	0·6	0·6	0·8	0·9	0·8	0·9	0·9	0·8	0·9	0·8	0·7	0·6	0·5	0·5
Transport	1·8	1·8	1·8	1·9	1·9	1·8	1·7	1·6	1·5	1·4	1·2	1·3	1·4	1·7
Housing	2·7	2·8	2·4	1·7	1·4	1·5	1·4	1·2	1·1	1·0	0·7	1·0	0·9	1·0
Other environmental services	1·4	1·5	1·5	1·4	1·5	1·4	1·2	1·2	1·3	1·2	1·1	1·2	1·3	1·4
Law, order and protective services	1·5	1·6	1·7	1·8	1·8	1·8	1·9	1·8	1·8	1·9	1·9	2·0	2·1	2·2
Education and science	5·7	5·5	5·9	5·8	5·7	5·5	5·4	5·1	5·2	5·1	5·0	5·1	5·1	5·3
Arts and libraries	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·3	0·2	0·3	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·3
Health and personal social services	5·4	5·4	6·0	6·2	6·1	6·0	6·0	5·8	5·8	5·8	5·7	5·7	6·0	6·4
Of which: Health	4·6	4·6	5·1	5·3	5·2	5·1	5·1	5·0	4·9	4·9	4·8	4·8	5·0	5·4
Social security	9·9	9·8	10·4	11·5	11·9	12·1	12·2	12·2	12·2	11·5	10·6	10·3	10·6	11·9
Miscellaneous expenditure[2]	1·6	1·5	1·2	1·3	1·4	1·2	1·3	1·1	1·2	1·3	1·1	1·4	1·3	1·1
Total expenditure on services	38·3	37·7	39·3	40·3	41·4	40·4	40·4	38·9	38·2	36·4	34·2	34·8	35·3	37·4
Privatisation proceeds	—	−0·2	−0·1	−0·2	−0·2	−0·4	−0·6	−0·8	−1·2	−1·2	−1·5	−0·8	−1·0	−1·4
General government gross debt interest	4·3	4·6	4·9	5·2	4·9	4·8	4·9	4·9	4·6	4·2	3·9	3·6	3·3	2·9
Other accounting adjustments	1·4	1·8	2·4	1·7	1·2	1·5	1·6	1·4	1·3	1·4	1·4	1·4	1·5	1·4
Adjustment[3]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·1
General government expenditure	44·0	43·9	46·5	47·0	47·3	46·2	46·3	44·4	42·9	40·8	38·0	39·1	39·1	40·5

[1] Using GDP figures adjusted to remove the distortion caused by the abolition of domestic rates.
[2] Includes contributions to the European Communities and activities required for the general maintenance of government, such as tax collection, and the registration of population.
[3] Difference between Treasury's overall assessment of outturn and sum of department's own estimates.

Relocation

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants, and in which Departments, he believes could be relocated to provincial centres as part of the policy of devolving and decentralising Government Departments.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government's relocation policy is not centrally directed. Relocation decisions are a matter for individual departmental Ministers. Departments are continuing to review the location of their work in the light of their own particular circumstances and operational requirements in accordance with clear guidelines, a copy of which was placed in the House of Commons Library in December 1991.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the Government intends to continue its previous policy of devolving Government Departments to provincial centres.

Mr. Dorrell: Yes. There are often substantial advantages to be gained from relocating offices away from London and the south-east. The Government's relocation policy is therefore to pursue the relocation of Government work where that provides best value for money.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to introduce value added tax on the sale of second-hand goods in charity shops; whether the seventh European Commission directive on value added tax applies to goods which are being resold for charitable purposes; and what estimates have been made of *(a)* the gain to the Exchequer and *(b)* the loss to charitable income of levying value added tax on goods sold in charity shops after 1996.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* We have no such plans and so no financial effects are anticipated. In principle the draft seventh VAT directive, if adopted as at present drafted, would apply to donated second-hand goods being sold for charitable purposes from 1993. But these are zero-rated in the United Kingdom and our zero rates are already fully safeguarded until at least 1997 under the sixth VAT directive. Decisions on tax matters within the EC require unanimity and there is no question of the United Kingdom being forced to accept unwelcome proposals to end zero-rating after that.

EDUCATION

Higher Education

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to introduce a quality audit for institutions of higher education.

Mr. Forman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 9 June 1992, *Official Report*, columns *88-89*.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the maximum salary payable, including perfomance-related element, and the length of time of the contract of the chief executive of the Teachers' Pensions Agency.

Mr. Forth: In 1992-93, the chief executive of the Teachers' Pensions Agency will be able to earn up to £43,470 including performance pay. The chief executive's contract is for five years.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much was spent on events and publicity surrounding the launch of the Teachers' Pensions Agency as an agency; and whether the cost was borne by the parent Department or the new agency.

Mr. Forth: The cost of the launch and associated publicity was £20,000. A total of £17,000 was borne by the Department and the remaining £3,000 by the agency.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the first degree obtained by the chief executive of the Teachers' Pensions Agency; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded.

Mr. Forth: The chief executive of the Teachers' Pensions Agency gained a first degree in botany from the university of Manchester.

Personal Records

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what conclusions he has reached on the implications of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Graham Gaskin for people seeking access to personal records for which he has responsibility and what action he intends to take.

Mr. Forth: The consultation document issued by the Department of Health on the implications of the Graham Gaskin judgment took the view that the application of the judgment should be restricted to social services records. Some of the responses queried this interpretation. We are therefore considering whether there are any implications for educational records.

Class Sizes

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his assessment of the maximum size of class in which the national curriculum can be satisfactorily delivered.

Mr. Forth: It is for schools to determine the appropriate size of teaching groups for different subjects in the light of their individual circumstances. The most important thing, however, is the quality of the teaching which pupils receive.

Technology Schools Initiative

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what plans he has to direct further resources towards the technology schools initiative network of schools; what are the differences in the criteria met by those schools from those of city technology colleges and whether the TSI network of schools will be given the opportunity to became full city technology colleges;

(2) if he will make a statement on the Government's future support towards recently designated technology schools within the technology schools initiative; and what steps these schools themselves can take to ensure that support.

Mr. Forth: The Government have announced capital allocations totalling £25 million in 1992-93 to support the technology teaching plans of 100 schools selected as a result of competitive bidding. These schools retain their existing status as grant-maintained, voluntary-aided, county or voluntary-controlled schools; in this respect they differ from city technology colleges established under the Education Reform Act (1988). The Government plan to expand and develop the network of schools supported by the technology schools initiative in future years.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if the technology schools initiative provision for the Southampton area is to be maintained; and what is the financial commitment for 1992-93.

Mr. Forth: The following school in the Southampton area was selected for support under the technology schools initiative in 1992-93.

Applemore School—£250,000 allocation.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps a local education authority school would need to take to achieve levels of provision equal to those of city technology colleges; how many of the existing TSI schools operate within the local education authority system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Of the 100 schools selected for capital support in 1992-93 under the technology schools initiative, 70 are maintained by local education authorities of which eight are voluntary aided schools. The recurrent funding of these schools is unaltered by their selection within the technology schools initiative. The funding of city technology colleges is determined separately.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will provide details of the financial implications of a primary school with 360 full-time five to 11-year-old pupils and 39 full-time equivalent three to four-year-old nursery pupils opting for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: The main recurrent grant for GM schools is annual maintenance grant—AMG—which is calculated with reference to the local management of schools scheme of the former maintaining LEA. This is set for GM schools in most LEAs at 15 per cent. above their LMS entitlement. This standard cash addition helps meet the cost of services previously provided free by the LEA. There is also a smaller addition related to school meal subsidy levels in that LEA. Calculation of AMG in respect of nursery pupils depends upon the relevant LEA's funding arrangements for such pupils.

GM schools are also eligible to receive other grants as follows:

i. Transitional grants to help meet the transitional costs of schools newly approved for GM status—in 1992-93 primary schools with more than 200 pupils can receive £30,000 plus £30 per pupil, to a maximum of £60,000.

ii. Special Purpose Grants to help with a variety of activities. For example the SPG for "development" helps fund in-service training and implementation of the National Curriculum and assessment, for which LEAs are funded via the GEST programme. This SPG is paid at a flat rate of £42·50 per pupil with a £5,000 minimum. Other SPGs are available to help with VAT, staff restructuring and premises insurance.

iii. There are two types of capital grant available to GM schools: a formula allocation for the purchase of equipment or small scale capital works; and project allocations for specific capital work. GM schools bid for project allocations and bids are considered in competition.

PRIME MINISTER

Prosecuting Authorities (Representations)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Prime Minister if he will outline his policy concerning representations to be made by individual Departments to the prosecuting authorities while considering evidence against individuals in cases concerning their Departments.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

The prosecuting authorities for which I am responsible as Attorney-General apply a dual test when considering

any prosecution. First there must be a sufficiency of evidence. Secondly, a prosecution must be required in the public interest.

In 1951 my predecessor then Sir Hartley Shawcross gave an authoritative explanation of the duty of the prosecutor in relation to the second test. That explanation referred to the duty of the Attorney-General when considering whether to authorise a prosecution but the principles are of general application. Briefly, it is the duty of the prosecuting authority, where appropriate in consultation with the Law Officers of the Crown, to acquaint itself with all the relevant facts, including, for instance, the effect which the prosecution, successful or unsuccessful as the case may be, would have upon public morale and order, and with any other consideration affecting public policy. Such consultations may, where appropriate, include Ministers and Government Departments. The assistance of those consulted is confined to informing the prosecuting authority or the Law Officers of particular considerations that might affect the prosecution decision, and does not consist, and must not consist, in telling it or them what the decision ought to be. Responsibility for the eventual decision does not rest with those making representations as to the public interest but with the independent prosecuting authorities.

Where a Department believes that it has information material to a prosecution decision it should so inform the prosecutor either directly or, where appropriate, through the Law Officers.

Earth Summit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what was the cost of shipping his official car from British Guyana to Rio de Janeiro for use during his visit to the Earth summit; how much was spent on re-equipping the car for this visit; and what attempts were made to seek appropriate vehicles in Brazil prior to deciding to import the car from Georgetown.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* The cost of shipping a protected vehicle from Guyana to Rio de Janeiro for my use during the Earth summit was £2,400. The vehicle is used by our diplomatic missions in south and central America as the situation so requires. The cost of necessary repairs to the car amounted to about £15,000. No suitable vehicles were available in Brazil at the same or lower cost.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Skopje

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's current policy in EC discussions concerning the naming of the Republic of Skopje.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We hope that EC partners can soon find a common position which will allow recognition of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Iraq

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the safety of the Kurds in northern Iraq and the Shias in southern Iraq and the Marshlands in the last three months.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We remain concerned about the plight of the civilian population in the whole of Iraq and in particular about recent reports of increased military attacks on civilians in the southern marshes.

On 4 June the Governments of France, the United States and the United Kingdom told the Iraqi Government that they should cease repressive actions against all the peoples of Iraq in violation of United Nations Security Council resolution 688.

We are determined to keep up the pressure on Iraq to meet all its obligations under Security Council resolutions.

Antarctic Treaty

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, column *86*, if he will make it his policy to introduce legislation on the environment protocol of the Antarctic treaty before the end of July.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We wish to introduce legislation as soon as possible to enact the provisions of the environmental protocol. It will unfortunately not be feasible to do so before the end of July.

Ceremonial Dress

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 8 June, *Official Report*, column *63*, if he will specify in each case the items of ceremonial dress for which expenditure was incurred.

Mr. Goodlad: Ceremonial dress normally consists of a uniform, a hat, boots and a sword.

WALES

Learning Disabilities

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been allocated in joint finance money to the health service in Wales; and what proportion has been spent on projects for people with learning disabilities.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A total of £1·8 million has been allocated in 1992-93 to projects in Wales under the joint finance scheme. A detailed breakdown of this amount, to identify the sum allocated to projects related to people with a mental handicap, could be made only at disproportionate cost. However, the main support for developing services for people with a mental handicap is the all-Wales mental handicap strategy, under which £41·5 million has been allocated in 1992-93.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all those functions and areas in his Department and associated agencies that have been identified for market testing in the wake of the White Paper "Competing for Quality".

Mr. David Hunt: The programme has yet to be finalised. An announcement will be made shortly.

Ysgol Derwyn School

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit Ysgol Derwyn CP school, Clwyd; and if he will meet *(a)* the staff and governors and *(b)* the parent teacher association of the school.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no plans at present to do so.

Homelessness

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of individuals registered under the homeless persons legislation as being homeless in Wales for each year since 1979 inclusive with the percentage increase/decrease on the previous years, and if he will provide a breakdown by local authority.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Numbers of persons in households accepted as homeless by local authorities under part III of the Housing Act 1985 are given in the table:

Numbers of Persons in Households Accepted as Homeless

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*[2]1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*[3]1990*	*1991*
Aberconwy	151	203	159	130	99	167	74	153	177	108	162	137	104
Alyn and Deeside	301	250	205	237	251	239	427	366	330	485	528	474	499
Arfon	80	59	51	55	61	38	62	51	102	63	65	77	93
Blaenau Gwent	333	361	388	464	459	454	447	489	463	595	695	841	761
Brecknock	69	114	86	160	152	134	217	162	180	176	243	269	318
Cardiff	690	1,410	973	1,053	730	862	1,646	1,751	1,592	2,971	3,334	2,483	4,052
Carmarthen	187	160	152	127	192	138	218	165	255	213	164	189	227
Ceredigion	94	102	92	103	149	203	149	140	188	187	180	331	373
Colwyn *(b)*	55	40	42	72	55	60	71	102	104	87	93	103	178
Cynon Valley	898	1,018	965	985	1,207	959	840	942	603	710	530	623	1,017
Delyn	175	151	264	240	197	255	297	391	712	679	1,002	825	683
Dinefwr	49	34	35	108	31	67	104	93	141	185	124	181	410
Dwyfor	138	60	106	74	69	124	126	142	163	119	178	162	127
Glyndwr	56	54	63	39	37	52	64	55	63	30	43	46	87
Islwyn	189	175	159	68	118	143	142	139	121	204	313	370	399
Llanelli	133	100	140	179	219	213	227	371	408	302	343	297	383
Lliw Valley	113	129	134	140	119	204	158	205	254	143	288	338	284
Melrionnydd	369	489	235	145	159	106	106	147	137	210	230	250	257
Merthyr Tydfil	454	392	272	238	253	232	225	179	207	191	359	496	365
Monmouth	515	380	532	437	475	447	717	664	618	576	357	281	388
Montgomeryshire	124	110	125	89	83	58	52	97	100	156	127	188	259
Neath	481	483	624	—	1,016	965	806	793	629	636	496	610	656
Newport	864	1,110	1,358	1,300	1,218	1,199	1,513	1,258	1,550	1,635	2,460	2,696	2,936
Ogwr	338	343	517	736	599	448	826	1,667	994	1,193	1,176	1,332	1,671
Port Talbot	170	133	94	112	160	226	164	304	357	327	442	303	340
Preseli Pembrokeshire	135	164	130	97	96	78	148	108	176	194	153	209	255
Radnorshire	19	38	45	14	19	34	54	23	31	60	36	64	45
Rhondda	569	834	1,164	1,049	852	479	317	320	268	270	292	166	358
Rhuddian	237	139	172	257	268	204	242	249	296	256	273	293	177
Rhymney Valley	534	720	510	284	418	344	629	643	410	580	655	439	395
South Pembrokeshire	143	188	181	202	230	280	224	165	210	271	241	248	205
Swansea[4]	1,604	1,838	2,820	1,887	1,416	1,396	762	685	654	439	345	450	1,779
Taff-Ely	390	253	200	188	158	176	186	278	321	395	442	568	715
Torfaen	1,049	978	723	790	675	426	531	958	708	881	968	1,216	1,038
Vale of Glamorgan	620	749	636	1,329	896	726	570	427	293	755	1,042	1,160	1,184
Wrexham Maelor	235	471	353	212	238	441	411	567	522	717	740	863	730
Ynys Mon	137	83	33	26	44	54	50	62	65	106	49	97	111
Wales	12,698	14,315	14,738	[1]14,446	13,418	12,631	13,802	15,311	14,402	17,105	19,168	19,675	23,859
Percentage change on previous year	—	12·7	3·0	−2·0	−7·1	−5·9	9·3	10·9	−5·9	18·8	12·1	2·6	21·3

Source: Welsh Office local authority returns.

[1] Includes an estimate for Neath as this is not available.

[2] Excludes data for Islwyn for the October to December quarter.

[3] Excludes those persons made homeless in Colwyn as a result of the major flooding incident in February 1990.

[4] It is known that the figure for Swansea prior to 1991 was under-recorded by the authority.

Housing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new measures he proposes to assist local authorities in their attempts to tackle the maintenance problems of housing stock.

Mr. David Hunt: For the private stock, this year I have made over £169 million available for home renovation and disabled facilities grants—an increase of £82 million over last year—with a further £26 million available for area renewal and defective dwellings.

For the public stock, I have increased subsidy allowances by an average of 7·5 per cent. per dwelling this year with biggest increases going to authorities with stock in poorest condition. Authorities estimate spending on management and maintenance within their housing revenue accounts at over £190 million this year. In addition to the estimated £91 million available to authorities for capital expenditure from credit approvals, usable receipts and revenue contributions I have set aside up to £6 million to tackle problems on selected estates under our estate partnership programme.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the proportion of the housing stock in Wales earmarked for the elderly in *(a)* 1980 and *(b)* 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: It is not possible to provide a reliable estimate of the proportion of Welsh housing stock suitable specifically for elderly persons.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he proposes to restore the level of council housing stock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Local authorities are being encouraged to develop their enabling role and work in partnership with housing associations who are now the main providers of new social housing in Wales. Inclusive of private finance Housing for Wales's total programme for 1992-93 will amount to over £180 million, which will provide some 4,000 new homes.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many new council houses were built in 1991; and how many council houses were sold.

Mr. David Hunt: In 1991, a total of 421 council houses were built and 3,668 were sold.

Disablement Benefits

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people living in Wales who suffer disabilities receive disablement benefits.

Mr. David Hunt: The latest available information on the numbers of recipients in Wales of social security disablement benefits and state compensation for disablement—war pensions—is shown in the table. The total of the numbers of recipients of the different benefits may be greater than the number of people receiving benefit as people may receive more than one benefit.

Benefit	*Latest date for which estimated number of recipients is available*	*Number in receipt*
Attendance Allowance	31 March 1991	63,000
Mobility Allowance	2 April 1992	59,000
Industrial Injury Disablement Benefit	30 March 1991	19,000
War Pension	31 December 1991	12,000
Severe Disablement Allowance	31 March 1990	22,000

Source: Department of Social Security.
Notes:
1. The above figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand (000).
2. Attendance allowance is an estimate based on a 1 per cent. sample.
3. Industrial injury disablement benefit numbers are current assessments but do not include reduced earning allowance or other industrial injury benefits and are based on a 10 per cent. sample.
4. War pension figures are based on a 10 per cent. sample.
5. Severe disablement allowance is based on a 1 per cent. sample.
6. The above refer to Wales as a statistical region with the exception of war pensions which is based on post office locality.

Historic Buildings Council

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to publish the next report of the Historic Buildings Council for Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The 35th annual report of the Historic Buildings Council for Wales has been published today. The report covers the financial year 1990-91 and copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Local Government

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the statutory responsibilities that he intends to propose shall be placed on the unitary local authorities in Wales following his proposed reorganisation of local government in Wales;

(2) if he will list the non-statutory and permissive powers he plans to propose shall be made available to the unitary local authorities in Wales following his proposed reorganisation of local government in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* Consultation on the reorganisation of local government in Wales has proceeded on the basis that the new unitary authorities will be responsible for those services currently the responsibility of the existing district and county councils. Detailed discussions on service delivery arrangements under the new structure are taking place with the local authority associations under the aegis of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Superphoenix Fast Reactor

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what United Kingdom investment has been made to date into the superphoenix fast reactor in France; and whether there are any outstanding commitments to the project by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: Nuclear Electric has a 1·65 per cent. holding in the German company Schnell-Bruter-Kerngraftwerks GmBh, SBK, which has a 16 per cent. holding in Superphoenix. There are no outstanding commitments.

Innovation

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he hopes to complete his consideration of the Faraday proposals, put forward by the Prince of Wales's working group on innovation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Speech made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on the Faraday proposals during the debate on science and technology on 11 June, *Official Report*, columns 481-82.

Privatisations

Mr. Tyler: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will review the role, responsibilities and powers of the regulatory bodies for former privatised industries within his Department's responsibilities to ensure more effective limitation of charges to the consumer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The powers of the regulators were reviewed in the preparatory work for the Competition and Service (Utilities) Act 1992. The provisions of that Act

enhance the powers of the regulators, and facilitate greater competition in gas. The industry regulators have already achieved price reductions in real terms since privatisation of 11 per cent. in BT's average residential bill, and 13 per cent. for domestic gas. Price rises for domestic electricity are limited to the increase in the RPI for the first three years of the new arrangements.

Export Credits

Ms. Quin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has had any discussions with Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan on unfair competition in conditions governing export credits available in EC countries.

Mr. Needham: No. However, my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State wrote to Sir Leon Brittan in September 1991 offering support for the Commission's work on eliminating subsidies in export credits and my officials are currently engaged in discussions on this with the Commission and their counterparts in other member states.

Ferrybridge C

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the present timetable for the installation of flue gas desulphurisation equipment at Ferrybridge C power station.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the President is considering an application from PowerGen for consent to fit flue gas desulphurisation equipment at Ferrybridge C. Subject to this, the timetable for installation of the equipment is a commercial matter for the company, consistent with meeting its emission limits set by the United Kingdom's national plan for implementing the European Community's large combustion plants directive.

European Community Directives

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the directives relevant to his Department made by the EC in the past 12 months; and what estimate he has made of the number of companies each directive will affect.

Mr. Needham: Following is a list of EC directives adopted since 1 June 1991 for which my Department has policy responsibility. No estimate has been made of the number of companies each directive will affect.

Directives adopted by the Council of Ministers

Council Directive 91/287/EEC of 3 June 1991 on the frequency band to be designated for the co-ordinated introduction of digital European cordless telecommunications (DECT). Official Journal Reference L144 of 8 June 1991.

Council Directive 91/368/EEC of 20 June 1991 amending Directive 89/392/EEC relating to machinery. Official Journal Reference L198 of 22 July 1991.

Council Directive 91/371/EEC of 20 June 1991 on the implementation of the Agreement between the European Economic Community and the Swiss Confederation concerning direct insurance other than life assurance. Official Journal Reference L205 of 27 July 1991.

Council Directive 91/674/EEC of 19 December 1991 on the annual accounts and consolidated accounts of insurance undertakings. Official Journal Reference L374 of 31 December 1991.

Council Directive 91/675/EEC of 19 December 1991 setting up an Insurance Committee. Official Journal Reference L374 of 31 December 1991.

Council Directive 92/31/EEC of 28 April 1992 amending Directive 89/336/EEC relating to electromagnetic compatibility. Official Journal Reference L126 of 12 May 1992.

Council Directive 92/38/EEC of 11 May 1992 on the adoption of standards for satellite broadcasting of television signals. Official Journal Reference L137 of 20 May 1992.

Directives addressed to Member States by the EC Commission under delegated procedure

Commission Directive 91/410/EEC of 22 July 1991 adopting to technical progress for the fourteenth time Council Directive 67/548/EEC relating to the classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous substances. Official Journal Reference L228 of 17 August 1991.

Commission Directive 91/442/EEC of 23 July 1991 on dangerous preparations, the packaging of which must be fitted with child resistant fastenings. Official Journal Reference L238 of 27 August 1991.

Commission Directive 92/8/EEC of 18 February 1992 adapting to technical progress Council Directive 76/768/EEC relating to cosmetic products. Official Journal Reference L70 of 17 March 1992.

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the draft directives issued by DGXXIII of the European Commission in the past 12 months; what estimate he has made of the number of companies each directive will affect; and at what cost.

Mr. Needham: DG XXIII of the European Commission has issued three draft directives in the past 12 months. They are:

(i) Proposal for a Council Directive supplementing the Statute for a European association with regard to the involvement of employees.

(ii) Proposal for a Council Directive supplementing the Statute for a European cooperative society with regard to the involvement of employees.

(iii) Proposal for a Council Directive supplementing the Statute for a European mutual society with regard to the involvement of employees.

No estimate has yet been made of the number of organisations likely to be affected by the directives, or the potential costs. A public consultation exercise is to be undertaken shortly which aims to assess the possible effect of the directives.

United States Exports

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give figures for the total United States exports to each of *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Japan, *(c)* Germany, *(d)* France and *(e)* Italy for the latest available year.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* The information is published in the OECD publication "Monthly Statistics of Foreign Trade", a copy of which is held in the House of Commons Library.

Trade Balances

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the invisible trade balance for each of *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the USA, *(c)* Germany, *(d)* France and *(e)* Japan for the latest available year.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* The information is in the table:

Balance on invisible transactions in 1990

Country	*Balance £ million*
United Kingdom	4·3
USA	8·9
Germany	−13·1

Country	Balance £ million
France	2·3
Japan	−15·5

Source: IMF Balance of Payments Statistics, CSO.

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the United Kingdom's bilateral trade balance with the United States for the latest available year; and what is the United Kingdom's trade balance with *(a)* Canada, *(b)* Japan, *(c)* France and *(d)* Germany.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* Information on United Kingdom visible trade is regularly published in "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", which is available in the Library of the House.

Visible Exports

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give figures for the total visible exports for the top 10 exporting countries for the latest available year.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* The information is available in the publication "GATT Focus Newsletter" issue 89 for April 1992, a copy of which is held in the House of Commons Library.

Car Imports

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give figures for imports of American-built cars from the United States of America to the United Kingdom for the latest available year, and comparable figures for imports from Germany and Japan.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* Information on United Kingdom imports is regularly published in "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", which is available in the Library of the House. The statistics classify goods according to the country of dispatch, which may differ from the country of manufacture.

Exports

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development figures for United Kingdom exports expressed as *(a)* per capita and *(b)* as a percentage of gross national product for the latest available year.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* The most recent year for which the OECD has published information on both the United Kingdom's population and exports is 1990. Based on this information, the value of United Kingdom visible exports per capita was £1,805 in 1990.

The OECD does not publish United Kingdom figures for gross national product. On the basis of gross domestic product, the United Kingdom's exports of goods accounted for 18·9 per cent. of GDP in 1990 and 18·2 per cent. in 1991.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Hutton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the involvement of Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte in the review of assisted areas being conducted by his Department; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* None.

Protective Equipment

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what arrangements he has made to consult the industry on appendix 4, glove and arm protection in the use of personal protective equipment at the workplace directive; where the section appears in the consultation document; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin I have been asked to reply.

Proposals to implement the use of personal protective equipment directive—89/656/EEC—were published by the Health and Safety Commission—HSC—on 6 December 1991 in its consultative document "Personal Protective Equipment at Work. Proposals for Regulations and Guidance". A copy is in the Library. The closing date for comments was 5 April 1992.

Within the consultative document, the HSC requested comments on the need for guidance in support of the regulations. It proposed that specific guidance on "Hand and Arm Protection" be prepared as appendix 4 to the supporting guidance. Both sides of industry will be further consulted following the preparation of such specific draft guidance.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all the executive agencies that have been established to date and the number of staff currently employed in each case, in full-time equivalents.

Mr. Waldegrave: The current list of established agencies including organisations that are operating on next steps lines showing the staff employed in each case is as follows:

Agency	Staff[1]
Accounts Services Agency	90
ADAS Agency	2,500
Building Research Establishment	700
Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments)	230
Central Office of Information[2]	670
Central Science Laboratory	370
Central Statistical Office	1,090
Central Veterinary Laboratory	590
Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment[3]	600
Civil Service College	230
Companies House[2]	1,070
Compensation Agency[4]	150
Defence Research Agency	12,150
Directorate General of Defence Accounts[3]	2,130
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency	4,580
Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency[4]	250
Driving Standards Agency	2,080
Duke of York's Royal Military School	100
DVOIT	590
Employment Service	38,400
Fire Service College[2]	160
Forensic Science Service	600
Historic Royal Palaces	330
Historic Scotland	630
HMSO[2]	3,250
Hydrographic Office[3]	860
Insolvency Service	1,470
Intervention Board	980
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	340
Land Registry	9,800

Agency	*Staff*[1]
Medicines Control Agency	300
Meteorological Office	2,390
Military Survey[3]	1,300
National Engineering Laboratory	390
National Physical Laboratory	830
National Weights and Measures Laboratory	50
Natural Resources Institute	440
Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation[3]	1,510
NHS Estates	120
Occupational Health Service	100
Ordnance Survey	2,380
Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland[4]	210
Patent Office[2]	1,080
Planning Inspectorate	630
Public Record Office	440
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre	60
Queen Victoria School	60
Radiocommunications Agency	520
RAF Maintenance[3]	13,300
Rate Collection Agency[4]	270
Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency	240
Registers of Scotland	1,280
Royal Mint[2]	1,020
Scottish Agricultural Science Agency	140
Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency	210
Service Children's Schools (North West Europe)[3]	2,300
Social Security Agency[4]	5,350
Social Security Benefits Agency	63,100
Social Security Contributions Agency	8,000
Social Security Information Technology Services Agency	4,000
Social Security Resettlement Agency	520
Teachers' Pensions Agency	300
The Buying Agency[2]	110
Training & Employment Agency[4]	1,670
Transport Research Laboratory	580
United Kingdom Passport Agency	1,250
Valuation Office	5,200
Vehicle Certification Agency	80
Vehicle Inspectorate[2]	1,820
Veterinary Medicines Directorate	80
Warren Spring Laboratory	310
Wilton Park Conference Centre	30
72 in number	210,960
Customs and Excise[5] (14 Executive Units)	26,800
Inland Revenue[5] (34 Executive Offices)	62,100
TOTAL:[6]	299,860
TOTAL CIVIL SERVANTS:[7]	290,490

[1] October 1991 figures for Civil Servants and Armed Forces Personnel. Casuals are excluded. Part time staff are counted as half units.
[2] Trading fund.
[3] Defence Support Agency.
[4] Northern Ireland Civil Service.
[5] Departments operating fully on 'Next Steps' lines. Staffing figure for Inland Revenue excludes the Valuation Office which is a free standing agency.
[6] Includes 8,070 Armed Forces personnel in Ministry of Defence Agencies, and 1,300 locally engaged staff in Service Children's Schools (North West Europe).
[7] Includes 7,900 Civil Servants in agencies of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all units of central Government that are currently under consideration for executive agency status, their parent Department, and the number of staff employed in each case, in full-time equivalents.

Mr. Waldegrave: The current list of activities announced by Departments as under consideration for executive agency status, together with their parent Departments and staff employed is as follows:

Candidate name	*Parent Department*	*Staff*[1]
Army Logistics[2]	Defence	12,700
Chessington Computer Centre	Treasury	440
Child Support Agency[3 4]	Northern Ireland	See note
Common Services Division[2]	Defence	1,700
Defence Animal Centre[3]	Defence	150
Defence Operational Analysis Centre[2]	Defence	180
Defence Postal Courier Service[2]	Defence	600
Defence Analytical Services Agency[2]	Defence	150
Directorate Information Technology Bureau Services[2]	Defence	120
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency[3]	Northern Ireland	250
Equipment Test and Evaluation[2]	Defence	2,220
Fuel Suppliers Branch	Environment	20
Her Majesty's Prison Service	Home Office	34,900
Human Factors Research[2]	Defence	390
Meat Hygiene Service[5]	Agriculture	See note
Ministry of Defence Police[2]	Defence	4,550
Naval Training[2]	Defence	5,040
National Health Service Superannuation Branch	Health	630
Office of Population Censuses and Surveys[6]	See note	2,150
Pesticide Safety Directorate	Agriculture	150
Property Division	Treasury Solicitor	120
Property Holdings Portfolio Management	Environment	460
Royal Air Force Training[2]	Defence	11,200
Royal Parks	National Heritage	580
Scottish Office Superannuation	Scottish Office	160
Scottish Prison Service	Scottish Office	4,100
Social Security Child Support Agency[7]	Social Security	See note
Valuation and Lands Office[3]	Northern Ireland	350
Youth Treatment Service	Health	220
29 in number		
TOTAL[8]		83,530
TOTAL CIVIL SERVANTS[9]		67,200

[1] October 1991 figures for civil servants and armed forces personnel. Casuals are excluded. Part-time staff are counted as half units.
[2] May be launched as a Defence Support Agency.
[3] Northern Ireland Civil Service.
[4] Estimated to require 550 staff by April 1993. Of these 120 will come from the Northern Ireland Social Security Agency.
[5] Estimated to require 1,800 staff, drawn from a variety of sources.
[6] Independent Government Department. Responsible Minister: Secretary of State for Health.
[7] From early 1993 the agency is estimated to require 4,500 staff, 1,500 of which will come from the Social Security Benefits Agency.
[8] Includes 16,330 armed forces personnel in Ministry of Defence candidates.
[9] Includes 600 civil servants in candidates of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Many other areas are under internal consideration for executive agency status.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what central guidance has been provided to departments and agencies on the subject of market testing and contracting out; and if he will place a copy of the guidance on the Library.

Mr. Waldegrave: In addition to the White Paper "Competing for Quality: Buying Better Public Services" Cm 1730, central guidance is contained in the public competition and purchasing unit's note No. 34. I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Permanent Secretaries

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list each permanent secretary, his or her current Department, the grade at which they entered the civil service, and the Department at which they began their civil service career.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are currently 23 permanent secretaries—Grade 1—in the home civil service. Details of their starting grade, Department first entered and current Department are as follows, although most have had wider experience:

Name	*Department first entered*	*Grade on entry*	*Current Department*
Sir Robin Butler	Her Majesty's Treasury	Assistant Principal	Cabinet Office
Sir Terry Burns	Her Majesty's Treasury	Chief Economic Adviser	Her Majesty's Treasury
Sir Derek Andrews	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	Assistant Principal	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Sir Anthony Battishill	Inland Revenue	Assistant Principal	Inland Revenue
Mr. Patrick Brown	Department of the Environment	Principal	Department of Transport
Sir John Caines	Ministry of Supply	Assistant Principal	Department for Education
Mr. John Chilcot	Home Office	Assistant Principal	Northern Ireland Office
Sir Geoffrey Chipperfield	Ministry of Housing and Local Government	Assistant Principal	Property Services Agency
Sir Christopher France	Her Majesty's Treasury	Assistant Principal	Ministry of Defence
Mrs. Barbara Mills	Serious Fraud Office	Grade 2	Crown Prosecution Service
Mr. Peter Graham	Her Majesty's Treasury	Assistant Parliamentary Counsel	Parliamentary Counsel Office
Sir Peter Gregson	Board of Trade	Assistant Principal	Department of Trade and Industry
Mr. Graham Hart	Ministry of Health and Social Security	Assistant Principal	Department of Health
Sir Russell Hillhouse	Scottish Education Department	Assistant Principal	The Scottish Office
Sir Geoffrey Holland	Ministry of Labour	Assistant Principal	Department of Employment
Mr. Thomas Legg	Lord Chancellor's Department	Legal Assistant	Lord Chancellor's Department
Sir Richard Lloyd-Jones	Admiralty	Assistant Principal	Welsh Office
Sir Malcolm McIntosh	Ministry of Defence	Grade 1	Ministry of Defence
Sir James Nursaw	Home Office	Legal Assistant	Treasury Solicitor's Department
Sir Michael Partridge	Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance	Assistant Principal	Department of Social Security
Sir Brian Unwin	Commonwealth Relations Office	Assistant Principal	Her Majesty's Customs and Excise
Sir Clive Whitmore	War Office	Assistant Principal	Home Office
Mr. Richard Wilson	Board of Trade	Assistant Principal	Department of the Environment

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fair Employment

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how and where the post of Fair Employment Commission director was advertised and recruited.

Mr. Atkins: The post of chief executive of the Fair Employment Commission, was filled in 1989 following advertisements in the *Belfast Telegraph*, the *Belfast Newsletter*, the *Irish News*, *The Guardian*, the *Irish Times*, *The Sunday Telegraph* and the *Sunday Times*.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what factors other than religious discrimination contribute to apparent discrepancies in work patterns in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: The existence of religious discrimination in Northern Ireland was central to Parliament's acceptance of the need for strengthened legislation to deal with

continuing inequalities in employment. It was, however, also accepted that other factors contribute to the differentials in employment and unemployment between Catholics and Protestants. The hon. Gentleman may find it useful to refer to the discussion on this complex matter in SACHR's "Report on Fair Employment" (Cm 237).

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list *(a)* the sectors of employment and *(b)* the individual companies or employers considered exempt for the purposes of fair employment monitoring.

Mr. Atkins: Only private sector concerns with 10 or fewer employees are exempt from the monitoring provisions of the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1989.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the difference between a target and a quota when the FEC investigates or scrutinises the annual monitoring returns of a company and sets a target to balance the work force.

Mr. Atkins: Under fair employment legislation the promotion of affirmative action to secure change permits the setting of goals and timetables against which progress may be measured. Goals and timetables are targets that an employer would expect, and should make good faith efforts, to reach within a certain timescale. Quotas on the other hand reserve jobs or training places for people on the basis of religious belief or political opinion and are unlawful in Northern Ireland.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will institute a survey of whether Protestant employers are more likely to discriminate than Roman Catholic employers.

Mr. Atkins: I have no plans to do so.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the extent to which balance in the work force is an accurate measure of equality of opportunity and sectarian balance can be achieved by discrimination.

Mr. Atkins: Balance in a work force is no guarantee that equality of opportunity is being afforded to both sides of the community. It is for this reason that the law requires employers regularly to review not only the religious composition of their work forces but their employment practices.

Travellers

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the sites that have been provided for travelling people or itinerants.

Mr. Atkins: Fully serviced sites have been provided for travelling people by district councils in Coalisland, Newry and Omagh and two sites in Londonderry.

Two serviced sites in Belfast are due for completion by September 1992. In the interim, travelling people are being provided with basic amenities at these two locations.

A partly serviced site has also been provided in Tattykeel, Omagh.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many travelling people or itinerants are presently residing on sites provided for their accommodation.

Mr. Atkins: There are approximately 620 travelling people currently residing on sites provided by local councils.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many travelling people or itinerants are known to be trespassing on *(a)* public land and *(b)* privately owned land.

Mr. Atkins: There are approximately 319 travelling people—75 vans—on public land and 46—11 vans—on private land. Their locations are as follows:

	People	*Vans*
Public land		
Belfast	236	51
Strabane	18	7
Armagh	40	11
Fermanagh	25	6
Private land		
Craigavon	16	4
Magherafelt	30	7

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of travelling people or itinerants currently residing in Northern Ireland; how many are United Kingdom citizens; and how many are immigrants from the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: A survey of travelling people in Northern Ireland in 1988, indicated that there were 1,050 individuals. Their numbers have not changed significantly during the last 3½ years.

It is estimated that 85-90 per cent. of those currently residing in Northern Ireland were born in Northern Ireland.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all those functions and areas in his Department and associated agencies that have been identified for market testing in the wake of the White Paper "Competing for Quality".

Mr. Mates: The proposals for market testing in Northern Ireland departments and agencies are under consideration and an announcement will be made shortly.

Homelessness

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of individuals registered under the homeless persons legislation as being homeless in Northern Ireland for each year since 1979, inclusive with the percentage increase or decrease on the previous year; and if he will provide a breakdown by local authority.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is not available prior to April 1989 when the homelessness provisions of the Housing (NI) Order 1988 came into operation. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive is the sole public housing authority in Northern Ireland, and I am advised by its chairman that the number of applicants accepted as being either homeless or threatened with homelessness since 1 April 1989 and the percentage increase on the previous year is as follows:

Year	Number	Difference
1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990	5,166	—
1 April 1990 to 31 March 1991	7,219	+39·7
1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992	7,494	+ 3·8

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was *(a)* the total expenditure and *(b)* the additional specific allocation for tackling homelessness which was provided in the latest financial year giving a breakdown by local authority.

Mr. Atkins: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive is the sole public sector housing authority in Northern Ireland. No resources are allocated to the executive specifically to tackle homelessness. However, its chairman has advised me that the executive spent £1·216 million on homelessness in 1991-92.

Cancer

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what were the cancer mortality rates in each electoral ward in the Southern health board area in each of the past 10 years;

(2) what were the average cancer mortality rates, in each health unit of management in Northern Ireland in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Hanley: This information is not available at electoral ward level. Figures at board level and figures based on the presently defined boundaries of health board units of management, are as follows:

Year	Rate per 100,000 of population
1982	177
1983	180
1984	160
1985	157
1986	176
1987	184
1988	181
1989	198
1990	188

Note: Figures for 1991 are not yet available.

Cancer mortality rate per 100,000 of population

Health board area Unit of management	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Eastern									
North-West Belfast and South-East Belfast	260	272	291	279	280	279	277	307	294
North Down and Ards	196	204	200	222	196	213	224	232	221
Down and Lisburn	168	175	187	176	152	186	172	179	191
Northern									
Bankside	161	137	174	154	161	184	166	183	165
Causeway	188	196	173	185	205	193	206	216	233
Loughside	174	201	195	208	201	208	223	216	225
Southern									
Craigavon and Banbridge	155	170	170	184	156	173	180	196	193
Armagh and Dungannon	186	174	149	164	179	204	201	188	189
Newry and Mourne	196	200	162	139	197	175	161	213	182
Western									
Foyle	150	148	160	157	167	188	181	170	168
Omagh and Fermanagh	142	170	189	204	178	161	237	191	202

Note: Figures for 1991 are not yet available.

International Fund for Ireland

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to meet the board of the International Fund for Ireland to discuss his Department's contacts with the fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has regular meetings with the chairman of the board of the international fund; the last such meeting was on 8 June. The Government are conscious of the valuable work being carried out by the fund which is making a significant contribution to the economic and social regeneration of the areas in which it works. We look forward to maintaining close contact with the board which is performing such a significant role.

ENVIRONMENT

Gravel Extraction and Waste Tipping

22. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the local authority associations and European Community institutions about the environmental problems arising from the twin industries of gravel extraction and the tipping of waste.

Mr. Baldry: There have been no specific discussions about the environmental aspects of gravel extraction and subsequent landfilling of wastes, but there has been involvement with the local authority association and the European Commission in consideration of a draft Directive on landfilling of wastes.

Water Regulation

25. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account the Office of Water Services takes of the level of investment in the water industry in its regulatory functions.

Mr. Maclean: As the water industry is engaged in a massive capital investment programme estimated to cost £28 billion, the Director General of Water Services, as the independent regulator, necessarily has a close interest in ensuring that the programme is carried out on time and in an efficient way.

Rented Housing

26. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received over the shortage of affordable rented accommodation.

Mr. Baldry: I receive such representations fairly frequently. There are local shortages of rented housing in some parts of the country, and the Government have a major public expenditure programme, amounting to nearly £8 billion this year, to build new social housing, renovate existing housing, and help council tenants on low incomes to afford their rents.

Mortgage Repossessions

27. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of the schemes to assist home owners threatened with repossession by banks and building societies.

Sir George Young: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretaries of State for Social Security and for Wales and I met the Council of Mortgage Lenders on 2 June to review progress with mortgage rescue schemes.

We were encouraged to hear the lenders' estimate that measures taken since December will save some 55,000 repossessions this year.

Both mortgage lenders and the Government will continue to give priority to making rescue schemes work.

Earth Summit

24. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining agreements reached at the Earth summit.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave earlier to the hon. Members for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) and for York (Mr. Bayley).

28. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to meet Maurice Strong to discuss the outcome of the Rio de Janeiro summit.

Mr. Howard: I had very useful discussions with Mr. Strong while in Rio, but I have no specific plans at the moment to meet him again.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of the official texts of the agreements reached at the United Nations conference in Rio de Janeiro.

Mr. Howard: The climate change convention text is already in the Library; the other texts will follow when official copies are available.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

29. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what savings have been made by local government as a result of the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering.

31. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what savings have been made by local government as a result of the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Research commissioned by the Department and carried out by the Institute of Local Government Studies at the university of Birmingham has found that annual cost savings of 6 per cent. of contract value have been achieved by local authorities as a result of competition for services under the Local Government Act 1988.

River Quality

30. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of rivers in England are in good or fair condition; and what is the European average.

Mr. Maclean: The 1990 river quality survey published by the National Rivers Authority shows that around 90 per cent. of river length in England and Wales is of good or fair quality. A review of river classification schemes across the European Community published in 1988 by the Water Research Centre showed that the average figure in the EC for rivers of comparable quality was 75 per cent.

Urban Programmes

32. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional statistics he proposes to collect under the Government's review of inner cities and urban renewal programmes.

Mr. Redwood: Inner city policies and programmes are regularly evaluated. We will continue to assess them in the light of various pieces of information including existing statistics, the 1991 census of population, experience of the first two rounds of city challenge and results of current research assessing the impact of inner city policies generally.

Subsidiarity

33. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will implement the principle of subsidiarity in the way the responsibilities of his Department are exercised and in the relationship between his Department and locally elected bodies.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Government are always guided by a proper interpretation of the rules of subsidiarity when conducting their relations with local government.

Poll Tax

34. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total cost to date of introducing, administering and collecting the poll tax, including the cost of Government-initiated relief schemes.

Mr. Robin Squire: The cost of preparing for administering and collecting the community charge in England up to 1 April 1992 has been about £1·2 billion. Government relief schemes have reduced the burden of local domestic taxation to 15 per cent. of local government spending and have not added to overall public expenditure.

Pollution Inspectorate

35. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the work of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution; and if he will arrange for hon. Members who wish to do so to visit the inspectorate.

Mr. Maclean: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has a key role in protecting the environment by enforcing the industrial pollution control regulations. The system has been strengthened by the introduction of integrated pollution contol under the Environmental protection act 1990, and the inspectorate's manpower complement has been increased significantly, from 199 at the time of its setting up in 1987 to 377 today.

Where hon. Members are seeking factual information on particular cases dealt with by the inspectorate, I am happy to arrange for those hon. Members to meet the inspectorate.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what powers of enforcement Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has with regard to integrated pollution control; and what considerations are taken into account in determining the charges levied on industry for administering the inspectorate of pollution;

(2) how many staff are currently employed by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution; what are the current operating costs of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution; and what the figures were for the previous two years.

Mr. Howard: The enforcement powers of inspectors of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution—HMIP—in relation to integrated pollution control are contained in part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. They include powers to revoke an authorisation to carry on a process; and to serve an enforcement notice to secure necessary improvements in the operation to a process, to serve a prohibition notice in relation to a process where there is considered to be an imminent risk of serious pollution.

It is an offence to operate a prescribed process without an authorisation or in contravention with the conditions within an authorisation, and to fail to comply with an enforcement or prohibition notice.

HMIP's fees and charges for pollution control are set so as to recover the inspectorate's costs relating to the carrying out of integrated pollution control and regulation of premises under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, as required by the relevant legislative provisions—section 8 of the Environmental Protection Act and section 11A of the Radioactive Substances Act.

There are currently 308 staff in post in HMIP. The figures for the previous two years were:

1 April 1990 172
1 April 1991 226·5

HMIP's authorised complement for 1992-93 has been increased to 377·5. Recruitment of additional staff is in progress.

In 1991-92, the operating cost of the inspectorate, on a full economic cost basis, was £20·5 million. For 1992-93, the forecast cost is £27·5 million, of which some £12·3 million relates to integrated pollution control and Radioactive Substances Act regulation and is recoverable through fees and charges. The increased total cost for 1992-93 is mainly due to the increase in staff in post and complement. Equivalent cost information for 1990-91 is not available.

Water Charges

36. **Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what monitoring the Director General of Water Services is undertaking of the charging policies of water companies.

Mr. Maclean: The director general monitors the charging schemes operated by water and sewerage undertakers to ensure that they do not give undue preference to or unfairly discriminate against any group or class of customer.

38. **Sir John Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what monitoring the Office of Water Services is carrying out over the level of water charges in the south-west.

Mr. Maclean: The Director General of Water Services monitors all water companies to ensure that they comply with the RPI plus K formula which is a condition of their licence, and that they do not give undue preference to or unfairly discriminate against any group or class of customer.

Environmental Protection Agency

37. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to bring forward legislative proposals for the environmental protection agency.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) on 13 May, *Official Report*, column *125*.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's arrangements for consulting the Data Protection Registrar during the planning stage of any initiative involving the collection, use or disclosure of personal data; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My Department observes the provisions of the Data Protection Act. Consultations with the Data Protection Registrar have taken place where necessary, and I am satisfied that arrangements are effective.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by local authority in England and Wales the current percentage rate of community charge outstanding in respect of the uniform business rate.

Mr. Robin Squire: Community charge is not payable in respect of the uniform business rate. Authorities in

England collected 89 per cent. of their 1991-92 budgeted community charge income by 31 March 1992 and 95 per cent. of their non-domestic rates income by the same date.

I have today placed in the Library of the House collection figures for each authority in England. Figures for Welsh authorities are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average annual increase in uniform business rate in *(a)* the South Lakeland district area and *(b)* the rest of England and Wales for 1991 and the current year.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* In each financial year the increase in the uniform business rate poundage is limited to the rate of inflation as measured by the retail prices index in September of the preceding year. This was 10·9 and 4·1 per cent. in 1991-92 and 1992-93 respectively.

In 1991-92 the annual increase in the aggregate rate bill for businesses in the South Lakeland district was 17·4 per cent. and for the rest of England and Wales it was 10·1 per cent. These figures take account not only of the increase in the poundage, but also of the transitional arrangements which are phasing in the effect of the 1990 reforms. For the current year, taking account of the changes to the transitional arrangements proposed in the Budget, we estimate the figures to be 2·8 per cent. and zero respectively.

Pollution

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to open records of pollutant discharges and offer environmental monitoring activities for public inspection.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 15 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *439*.

Community Charge

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what purpose the community charge register has been used; and what plans he has for using this register in the future.

Mr. Robin Squire: Charging authorities use their community charges register to determine individuals' liability for the community charge. Under the council tax authorities will not require a register of all adults, although they will generally wish to identify who is liable in respect of a property. In the initial stages the community charges register will help them to do this, but after 1 April 1993 it will quickly lose its relevance.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had, since 1 January 1990, about purchases by local authorities of computer equipment and software for the administration of the community charge which failed to operate efficiently; what estimates he has made *(a)* of the number of local authorities involved and *(b)* the extra costs incurred; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: My Department has not received any specific representations.

Grant Settlement

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce the new grant settlement for 1993-94 for local authorities.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities on 21 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *195*.

Council Tax

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he has given to ensure that local authorities use computer software for the administration of the council tax which is *(a)* efficient and cost effective and *(b)* compatible, as far as possible, with equipment used in the administration of the community charge.

Mr. Robin Squire: It is a matter for local authorities to decide which computer system they use to run the council tax. My Department has sponsored a detailed council tax computer system specification produced by the Local Authority Systems Alliance. This offers advice on all identified user requirements and addresses the varied application needs of authorities for in-house computer development, software house systems and package evaluation. A copy has been sent to all authorities.

Rent Control

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many lettings became available as the result of the abolition of rent control in June 1987.

Mr. Baldry: Rent control in England was ended, for new lettings only, when the relevant provisions of the Housing Act 1988 came into effect on 15 January 1989. The most recent figures available are from the 1990 private renters survey. By summer 1990 there were an estimated 480,000 lettings in the newly decontrolled sector in England, 130,000 of them in properties which had not been let to private tenants two years earlier.

Council House Sales

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what receipts have been received by the Easington district council in each year since 1987 through the sale of council houses, land and other buildings.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is as follows:

Easington DC: Total sales of fixed assets

	£'000
1987-88	3,022
1988-89	4,280
1989-90	5,152
1990-91	4,582
1991-92	[1]3,925

[1] Provisional.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to review the regulations governing service charges to former council tenants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: No changes are proposed. Council tenants who purchase their flats under the right to buy normally

covenant in their lease to pay a reasonable contribution towards the costs of repairs and other services provided by the landlord. This follows private sector practice.

The protections against unreasonable service charges in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 apply to all leaseholders, including former council tenants.

Local Government Commission

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what review the Local Government Commission for England will be conducting of the functions of parish or town councils in respect of developing enhanced responsiveness to local needs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The policy guidance to the Local Government Commission makes it clear that in considering whether options for changes to local government structure allow for the effective local discharge of functions or enhanced responsiveness to local needs, the commission should take into account the scope for delegations to parish councils.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what review the Local Government Commission for England will be conducting of parish, town and community boundaries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. and learned Friend may direct the Local Government Commission to review parish boundaries under section 13 of the Local Government Act 1992. He has not yet decided what parish reviews he will direct the commission to carry out.

Emissions

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many fossil-fuelled power stations have had their consent to emit sulphur dioxide reduced under the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when the review of existing consents for the emission of sulphur dioxide, carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide from all fossil-fuelled power stations will be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: No authorisations for fossil-fuelled power stations have yet been granted under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Two applications for authorisation, in respect of National Power's stations at Pembroke in Wales and Padiham in Lancashire, are currently being considered by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. The company has agreed to extend the determination period for these applications until 30 September. The remaining applications for authorisation are the subject of appeals to my right hon. and learned Friend about commercial confidentiality. They cannot be determined until after the appeal decision, which will be made as soon as possible.

Planning and Compensation Act 1991

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what parts of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 remain to be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the timetable for doing so.

Mr. Baldry: The main provisions of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 have already been implemented. Following further public consultations, my right hon. and learned Friend proposes to make orders and regulations giving effect to the remaining provisions in the summer and autumn of 1992, as follows:

Early Summer

Notices etc. of applications for planning permission—(section 16)

Land of interested planning authorities and development by them—(section 20)

Mid Summer

Remaining enforcement provisions—(sections 2, 4 (part) and 10)

Demolition of buildings—(section 13)

Autumn

Remaining provisions on Planning obligations—(section 12, (Schedules 106A and 106B))

Simplified planning zones—(section 28).

EC Directives

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the environmental directives which have been issued by the European Community in the past 12 months; and what estimate he has made of the number of companies each directive will affect.

Mr. Maclean: The following is a list of environmental directives issued by the European Community since 1 June 1991. Information on the numbers of companies affected by each directive is not collected centrally.

Directive No.	*Directive title*
91/322	Protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to chemical, physical and biological agents at work.
91/325	Classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous substances (12th adaptation)
91/326	Classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous substances (13th adaptation)
91/338	Restrictions on marketing and use of certain dangerous substances and preparations (cadmium)
91/339	Restrictions on marketing and use of certain dangerous substances and preparations (ugilec, DBBT)
91/368	Noise from construction plants
91/382	Worker protection from exposure to asbestos
91/410	Classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous substances (14th adaptation)
91/414	Marketing of plant protection products
91/441	Amending diretive 70/220 on air pollution by emissions from vehicles
91/542	Amending directive 88/77 on air pollution by emissions from diesel engines
91/632	Classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous substances (15th adaptation)
91-659	Restrictions on marketing and use of certain dangerous substances and preparations (asbestos)
91/676	Protection of waters against nitrate pollution form agriculture
91/689	Hazardous waste
91/692	Standardising and rationalising reports on the implementation of certain directives relating to the environment
92/3	Supervision and control of shipments of radioactive waste between Member States and into and out of the Community
92/143	Aircraft noise

Homelessness

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total cost of providing bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless persons for each year since its introduction; and if he will provide a breakdown by *(a)* region and *(b)* local authority.

Mr. Baldry: The available information for England is as follows:

Bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless persons: England

	Net expenditure £ million
1984-85	15·7
1985-86	33·9
1986-87	75·5
1987-88	104·2
1988-89	90·2
1989-90	72·6

Tables giving the readily available breakdowns by region and by local authority, covering 1988-89 and 1989-90, have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of individuals registered under the homeless persons legislation as being homeless in *(a)* England as a whole and *(b)* Great Britain as a whole for each year since 1979 inclusive, with the percentage increase/decrease on the previous year; and if he will provide a breakdown by (i) region and (ii) local authority.

Mr. Baldry: The available information represents the numbers of households for whom local authorities accepted responsibility for securing permanent accommodation, under the homelessness provisions of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and the Housing Act 1985. Estimates of the total number of persons in these households are not available centrally.

The information for England is as follows:

Year	*Households accepted*	*Percentage increase/ decrease*
1979	55,530	—
1980	60,400	+8·7
1981	66,990	+10·9
1982	71,620	+6·9
1983	75,470	+5·4
1984	80,500	+6·7
1985	91,010	+13·1
1986	100,490	+10·4
1987	109,170	+8·6
1988	113,770	+4·2
1989	122,180	+7·4
1990	140,350	+14·9
1991	145,140	+3·4

A new reporting system was introduced for non-metropolitan districts from the fourth quarter of 1980 and for the other authorities from the third quarter of 1982. As a result figures for 1979 to 1982 are not strictly comparable with those for later periods.

From the second quarter of 1991 the definition of acceptances was altered to exclude intentionally homeless and all the figures have been adjusted to the new basis.

Regional estimates on the old basis for each quarter of 1984 and 1985 appear in table 1 of "Homeless Households Reported by Local Authorities in England: Supplementary Tables". Results for subsequent quarters of 1986 to 1990 inclusive appear in table 1 of various issues of "Local Authorities' Actions Under 'the Homelessness Provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England, Results for . . . Quarter 19 . . ., Supplementary Tables".

Regional estimates on the new basis for 1991 appear in the information bulletin "Households Found Accommodation Under the Homelessness Provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England: Statistics for the First Quarter of 1992". It is not appropriate to calculate percentage changes between figures on the old basis and the new basis. Estimates adjusted to the new basis, from 1984 onwards, will be published later this year.

Copies of all these publications and the list of relevant issues for regional estimates for 1986 to 1990 are available in the Library.

I have also placed in the Library tables giving the information actually reported by individual local authorities in England for each year from 1981 to 1991 inclusive. Information for the years 1979 and 1980 is available in edition no. 54, table 14, edition no. 61, table 11, and edition no. 62, table 13, of "Local Housing Statistics: England and Wales", copies of which are in the Library.

For information about Wales and Scotland I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Scotland.

Fire Regulations

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions planning appeals to his Department under section 13 of the Hampshire Act 1983 have not been upheld; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Since 1 November 1990 my Department has received six appeals under section 13 of the Hampshire Act. One of these was withdrawn, one is under consideration at present and the other four appeals were upheld.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to ensure that the provisions of section 13 of the Hampshire Act 1983 with respect to fire safety in very large low-rise buildings are upheld in the planning appeal process.

Mr. Baldry: Appeals to the Secretary of State under section 13 of the Hampshire Act are not part of the planning system. They arise from the refusal of the building control authority to approve plans deposited in accordance with the requirements of the building regulations. The Secretary of State will continue to consider each case on its own merits, with the interests of the health and safety of people in and around buildings in mind.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research has been carried out by his Department into the effectiveness of sprinklers, fire ventilation and other fire protection measures in very large low-rise buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has carried out research over a number of years into many aspects of sprinkler performance, fire ventilation and other fire protection

measures. The knowledge gained from this work has informed the recently completed review of the technical content of building regulations, and has provided the basis for most of the guidance available to designers on such systems. This guidance includes methods applicable to very large low-rise buildings. The Department will continue to support work in these areas to improve our understanding of the processes involved, and to develop and refine the guidance available to designers and enforcing authorities.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what powers are available to local authorities to require measures to assist fire fighters, such as sprinklers and fire ventilation in very large low-rise buildings.

Mr. Baldry: The Building Regulations 1991, made under the Building Act 1984, require provision to be made for access and facilities for the fire service. The functional requirement is set out in schedule 1 of the building regulations, under part B5. The requirements to provide adequate means of escape—B1—and to address the dangers of internal and external fire spread—B2, B3, B4—also assist fire fighters. In some parts of England and Wales local Acts contain provisions which also have a bearing on assistance to fire fighters.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will seek to amend the Building Regulations 1991 to require the provision of sprinklers and fire ventilation in very large low-rise buildings.

Mr. Baldry: A major review of the building regulations and associated technical guidance on fire safety has just been completed. There are no plans to amend the regulations on the lines suggested.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement regarding the appropriate fire protection measures required in very large low-rise buildings.

Mr. Baldry: The latest approved document on fire safety, published by HMSO in December 1991, gives guidance on fire protection measures appropriate to satisfy the requirements of the Building Regulations. Other Government Departments issue guidance on the measures necessary to satisfy other legislative requirements. Guidance on measures to reduce property fire losses has recently been published by the Loss Prevention Council.

Dittiscombe Equestrian Centre

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the appeal by the Dittiscombe equestrian centre, Dittiscombe, Slapton, south Devon, against the level of business rate will be heard; when it was first lodged; and what is the reason for the time taken for the hearing.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* The proposal dated 2 August 1990 was received as an appeal by the Devon valuation tribunal on 4 January 1991 and is provisionally listed for hearing on 9 November 1992.

Following revaluation on 1 April 1990, the tribunal initially received more than 10,000 list appeals. Most of these were received towards the end of that financial year and by the end of April 1992 some 4,000 had been resolved.

Valuation tribunals are independent bodies and the priority and timing of cases is primarily a matter for them. In general, tribunals are adopting a systematic approach to the settlement of cases, with a view to establishing a common level of value for classes of property in particular locations in the 1990 rating list. This means mainly concentrating on more significant cases which could have a bearing on the assessments of similar properties in the same area, and provide many ratepayers with sufficient evidence to enable them to settle their cases by agreement.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Trade Gap

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the Government expects to publish their response to the second report from the Agriculture Committee of Session 1991-92, on the trade gap in food and drink; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Government's response is published today, and copies are available in the Libraries of the House.

I welcome the report of the Select Committee as a valuable contribution to the debate on the trade gap. It supports the Government's view that collaboration between producers is the best way for them to produce what the market wants, and that close collaboration is also needed between producers, processors and retailers.

The Government are addressing these needs through the group marketing grant which they introduced in April. We believe that it can make a real contribution to improved marketing at home and abroad.

I am delighted that the marketing initiative is moving forward on such a broad front. Food from Britain is working with us on the group marketing grant and will certainly have a role to play in other ways too. The National Farmers Union has its own Food from the Countryside programme and regional food fairs are planned. Several food and retail companies are sponsoring the three-year initiative with Strathclyde university on improving opportunities for British suppliers. there has never been so much interest in this subject, and I am sure that working together we can make a real impact.

The response acknowledges that the Committee and the Government are in agreement that intra Community trade in agriculture produce should be conducted on a fair footing. However, the Government do not accept that the taxpayer should offset the cost of national food safety or animal welfare measures, since these are ultimately of benefit to the industries concerned. For the same reason the Government do not feel that an increase in its contribution to Food from Britain is justified at present. The Government agrees with the importance which the Select Committee places on marketing and collaboration.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether he will now review his policy about not slaughtering the offspring of BSE-infected cattle;

(2) if he will make available in the Library the results of the research funded by his Ministry into the genetic link with BSE conducted by Dr. Wijeratne and that carried out

by his Central Veterinary Laboratory into the same topic; and whether he will convene the Tyrrell committee to assess the findings of this research.

Mr. Gummer: The work by Dr. Wijeratne and colleagues into a genetic susceptibility to BSE is not complete. When it is, the outcome will be published without delay.

The Tyrrell committee is well aware of this research and of progress on it. Preliminary results so far show only that in one breed there appear to be some cows with an inherited increased susceptibility to BSE. This does not mean that BSE is a genetic disease. In addition, increased susceptibility is irrelevant if an animal is not exposed to infection.

The Government's policy of slaughtering affected animals and banning the feeding of ruminant derived protein is already designed to ensure that cattle are not exposed to the source of infection. All the evidence indicates that other possible sources of infection, particularly maternal or horizontal infection, will have little or no effect on the epidemic. There is therefore no justification for a calf slaughter policy or further control measures.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many times the Tyrrell committee has met each year since 1989.

Mr. Gummer: Seven times in 1990, six in 1991 and on three occasions so far this year.

Farmers Charter

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has produced a charter for farmers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall be announcing shortly my Department's contribution to the implementation of the principles of the citizens charter, for the benefit of consumers as well as farmers.

Whaling

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 4 June, *Official Report*, column *642*, when he expects to announce Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the French proposal for an Antarctic whale sanctuary; whether he is awaiting scientific advice on that proposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The French proposal for an Antarctic whale sanctuary addresses a number of issues to the International Whaling Commission's scientific committee, now in session at Glasgow. This is an interesting proposal; we shall need to consider the scientists' advice on it when available; and we will take full part in the IWC's deliberations about it at the 44th annual meeting in Glasgow from 29 June to 3 July.

CAP Reform

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has for CAP reform during the British presidency of the EC.

Mr. Curry: We aim to carry forward the process of CAP reform by ensuring, in particular, that all necessary action is taken to implement the measures agreed on 21 May and by seeking agreement on reform of the EC regimes for sugar and wine, on consolidation of the rules on milk quotas and on a new agrimonetary system.

Eggs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what egg marketing regulations are applicable in England and Wales for the sale of duck and goose eggs; if the sale of these eggs is affected by any European Community regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Duck and goose eggs are outside the scope of the EC regulations on egg marketing standards. There are no United Kingdom marketing regulations relating to the sale of duck and goose eggs.

Compensation

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in establishing regional quantities for determining compensation in the arable sector and for the beef special premium.

Mr. Curry: In the arable sector, the area on which cereals, oilseeds, protein crops and set-aside payments are made will be reduced in-year and an additional, uncompensated set-aside requirement will be imposed the following year if the regional base area is exceeded. The regional base area will be equal to the average of cereals, oilseeds and protein production and set-aside for 1989, 1990 and 1991. Regional boundaries will be established once the necessary Commission implementing regulations have been agreed.

Beef special premium payments will be reduced if, in respect of applications for the premium payment on young animals, the regional ceiling is exceeded. In determining the level of regional ceilings, member states may take the number of animals on which premium was claimed in 1990, 1991 and 1992. The make-up of regions and the choice of reference year will be decided once implementing regulations have been agreed.

Sheep Dips

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the number and efficacy of non-organophosphorous sheep dips.

Mr. Soames: Three non-organophosphorous sheep dip products are currently licensed but, along with other sheep dips, these are currently subject to review by the Veterinary Products Committee. Data have been requested from the industry, and these must demonstrate that modern standards of safety, quality and efficacy are met before reviewed licences can be issued.

Fur Farms

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to ban fur factory farming of wild animals.

Mr. Soames: The European Commission is expected to issue proposals for Community controls on the keeping of animals for fur.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he intends to take to ensure there are proper slaughterhouse facilities in the New Forest area, following the closure of the last slaughterhouse in that area as a result of EC directives.

Mr. Soames: The Government have no reason to doubt that there will be sufficient slaughtering capacity, either nationally or locally, following implementation of the EC single market requirements on 1 January 1993. It will be for individual slaughterhouse operators to take commercial decisions whether to upgrade their premises to meet the new requirements, which the Government fully support.

Animal Transport

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what steps he plans to take to ensure that, as required by article 5.2 of the new EC directive on the protection of animals during transport (19/628/EEC), itineraries are drawn up for animal transport journeys exceeding 24 hours to ensure that the animals are rested and given food and water;

(2) whether he will require his officials from 1 January 1993 to ensure that the animal welfare requirements of EC directive on the protection of animals during transport (91/628/EEC) have been taken into account before issuing health certificates under directive 90/425/EEC for animals being transported from the United Kingdom to other countries.

Mr. Soames: Proposals for the implementation of directive 91/628 are under consideration and will be issued to interested organisations for comment. Further decisions remain to be taken in the Community on the resting, feeding and watering of animals at appropriate intervals and on the arrangements for certification.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Heald: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Agriculture Council held on 15 and 16 June.

Mr. Gummer: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting of the Council together with my hon. Friend the Minister of State in my Department.

As regards rabies, strict conditions were agreed for the commercial import of dogs and cats into the United Kingdom from 1 July 1994. Imports will be limited to registered traders, and involve vaccination and a blood test to authenticate its success; tight controls will be imposed on the origin, transport, destination and identification of the animals concerned. These arrangements are at least as strict as our present quarantine arrangements. It was also agreed that if any proposal is made to change quarantine requirements for pets it must provide at least the same level of protection as for traded animals. This represents a most satisfactory result on what was potentially one of the most serious problems of the single market.

The Council adopted a directive on milk hygiene which sets strict standards for production and trade in milk and milk products. This represents a further useful step towards the single market. However, allowance is also made for the manufacture of products with traditional characteristics such as soft cheeses. This responds entirely satisfactorily to concerns that were widely expressed that the directive could render such products unmarketable.

The Council discussed certain details of the CAP reform package agreed last month. I stressed there could be no question of amending that agreement to provide concessions for certain countries. Implementing texts are expected to be adopted at the next meeting of the Council which will now start on 30 June.

SCOTLAND

Learning Difficulties

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been allocated in joint finance money to the health service in Scotland; and what proportion has been spent on projects for people with learning disabilities.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not held centrally. Revenue expenditure allocations to health boards are not earmarked for specific purposes and it is for health boards themselves to determine how much will be spent on joint finance projects.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by local authority the current percentage rate of community charge outstanding in respect of the uniform business rate.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not held centrally.

Kingston Bridge, Glasgow

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the daily vehicle capacity for which the Kingston bridge, Glasgow, was designed; and what is the latest available estimate of daily vehicle usage.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The anticipated daily vehicle flows and current estimated daily vehicle usage at the Kingston bridge, Glasgow are matters for Strathclyde regional council as the local roads authority responsible for the bridge.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all those functions and areas in his Department and associated agencies that have been identified for market testing in the wake of the White Paper "Competing for Quality".

Mr. Lang: I am currently considering the market testing programme for my Department.

Football Grounds

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will allow standing room to be retained at Scottish football grounds.

Sir Hector Monro: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) on 4 June 1992 at columns *627-28*.

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of local authorities qualifying for housing support grant and the total housing support grant expenditure expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* at 1990-91 prices; and if he will provide a breakdown for each of the local authorities in receipt of housing support grant for each year since 1979, inclusive.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The housing support grant payable to individual local authorities in each financial year since 1979-80, expressed in cash terms and in real terms at 1990-91 prices is shown in the tables:

Housing support grant (expressed in cash terms)

Area	*1979-80*	*1980-81*
Scotland	213,400,000	228,200,000
Berwickshire	1,304,502	1,306,875
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1,725,856	1,753,749
Roxburgh	1,734,338	1,971,598
Tweeddale	289,209	285,768
Clackmannan	1,850,234	1,818,745
Falkirk	7,957,349	7,479,143
Stirling	1,929,781	1,916,151
Annandale and Eskdale	1,094,232	1,452,108
Nithsdale	1,147,826	905,200
Stewartry	548,774	676,321
Wigtown	1,046,584	1,154,830
Dunfermline	5,391,353	6,079,270
Kirkcaldy	6,303,279	6,500,216
North East Fife	1,586,114	1,664,141
Aberdeen	9,749,391	10,733,105
Banff and Buchan	4,966,010	5,495,862
Gordon	2,857,278	2,860,784
Kincardine and Deeside	1,304,661	1,373,533
Moray	4,237,483	4,402,062
Badenoch and Strathspey	413,089	470,225
Caithness	1,231,796	1,044,456
Inverness	2,461,414	2,323,484
Lochaber	1,860,212	1,825,267
Nairn	320,089	351,660
Ross and Cromarty	3,889,456	4,249,933
Skye and Lochalsh	342,729	343,792
Sutherland	674,923	729,163
East Lothian	4,723,964	5,062,507
Edinburgh	11,269,405	12,517,913
Midlothian	3,496,811	3,334,405
West Lothian	4,655,453	4,796,099
Argyll and Bute	3,410,909	3,565,946
Bearsden and Milngavie	464,877	458,385
Clydebank	3,548,652	4,032,786
Clydesdale	1,842,814	1,651,898
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	677,835	670,398
Cumnock and Doon Valley	1,982,826	1,812,670
Cunninghame	4,800,670	4,656,897
Dumbarton	2,997,918	2,805,151
East Kilbride	327,324	340,284
Eastwood	282,503	303,824
Glasgow	41,496,149	49,487,984
Hamilton	4,960,259	5,015,434
Inverclyde	5,602,776	6,140,965
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	3,584,819	4,168,590
Kyle and Carrick	4,422,325	4,351,786
Monklands	4,601,208	4,359,605
Motherwell	7,919,644	8,193,225
Renfrew	6,486,220	6,571,032
Strathkelvin	1,956,176	2,401,186
Angus	4,236,548	4,372,617
Dundee	7,740,698	8,602,017
Perth and Kinross	3,502,848	3,118,176
Orkney	1,074,091	1,103,278
Shetland	2,099,598	1,889,843
Western Isles	1,016,718	1,247,658

Area	*1981-82*	*1982-83*
Scotland	161,900,000	104,632,870
Berwickshire	1,038,356	686,226
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1,154,679	552,583
Roxburgh	1,537,295	1,165,695
Tweeddale	109,055	0
Clackmannan	1,283,981	689,627
Falkirk	4,428,554	1,494,309

Area	1981-82	1982-83
Stirling	1,016,562	1,335,195
Annandale and Eskdale	1,272,965	1,387,048
Nithsdale	100	0
Stewartry	542,539	412,797
Wigtown	767,726	452,325
Dunfermline	2,800,067	683,115
Kirkcaldy	3,077,166	696,260
North East Fife	979,538	829,197
Aberdeen	9,533,966	7,089,761
Banff and Buchan	4,343,622	3,306,069
Gordon	2,379,107	2,240,622
Kincardine and Deeside	933,388	817,907
Moray	3,552,254	2,301,798
Badenoch and Strathspey	435,542	505,386
Caithness	876,132	817,378
Inverness	1,631,231	1,375,208
Lochaber	1,813,360	1,383,564
Nairn	251,993	206,063
Ross and Cromarty	4,199,542	3,493,364
Skye and Lochalsh	316,747	316,309
Sutherland	519,316	477,942
East Lothian	3,155,554	2,079,858
Edinburgh	7,869,440	2,327,904
Midlothian	1,791,607	906,746
West Lothian	2,182,016	0
Argyll and Bute	2,811,692	2,767,417
Bearsden and Milngavie	193,589	0
Clydebank	3,285,203	2,201,808
Clydesdale	578,477	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	117,762	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	819,727	167,191
Cunninghame	2,744,500	745,237
Dumbarton	1,177,708	0
East Kilbride	98,060	0
Eastwood	15,462	0
Glasgow	44,099,691	37,292,928
Hamilton	3,243,635	1,543,988
Inverclyde	4,443,201	3,048,261
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	1,885,952	298,335
Kyle and Carrick	2,807,798	911,439
Monklands	4,252,050	3,222,528
Motherwell	5,737,727	3,296,551
Renfrew	2,186,158	0
Strathkelvin	1,539,073	1,198,935
Angus	2,499,757	1,221,795
Dundee	5,285,879	1,820,168
Perth and Kinross	1,309,294	0
Orkney	1,082,222	852,422
Shetland	2,624,591	2,654,652
Western Isles	1,267,392	1,358,959

Area	1983-84	1984-85
Scotland	72,135,479	67,211,241
Berwickshire	648,884	486,805
Ettrick and Lauderdale	373,420	107,262
Roxburgh	1,260,321	1,265,786
Tweeddale	0	0
Clackmannan	45,021	0
Falkirk	0	0
Stirling	20,431	0
Annandale and Eskdale	1,574,069	1,673,013
Nithsdale	0	0
Stewartry	414,643	359,095
Wigtown	255,317	200,315
Dunfermline	0	0
Kirkcaldy	0	0
North East Fife	309,583	87,427
Aberdeen	3,724,702	3,053,523
Banff and Buchan	2,437,206	1,943,394
Gordon	1,709,877	1,940,317
Kincardine and Deeside	972,194	854,052
Moray	1,987,151	1,790,081
Badenoch and Strathspey	515,570	487,297
Caithness	819,544	826,248

Area	1983-84	1984-85
Inverness	1,241,308	1,305,145
Lochaber	1,334,449	1,225,81
Nairn	265,393	227,117
Ross and Cromarty	3,091,946	3,241,650
Skye and Lochalsh	323,325	394,993
Sutherland	446,107	467,987
East Lothian	1,050,527	392,369
Edinburgh	0	0
Midlothian	0	0
West Lothian	0	0
Argyll and Bute	2,554,514	2,308,945
Bearsden and Milngavie	0	0
Clydebank	1,855,408	1,774,590
Clydesdale	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0
Cunninghame	0	0
Dumbarton	0	0
East Kilbride	0	0
Eastwood	0	0
Glasgow	32,355,851	32,269,404
Hamilton	119,816	0
Inverclyde	1,865,250	1,162,804
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	447,952	0
Monklands	1,705,278	1,956,032
Motherwell	1,037,418	0
Renfrew	0	0
Strathkelvin	326,922	2,775
Angus	181,321	0
Dundee	0	0
Perth and Kinross	0	0
Orkney	731,864	779,233
Shetland	2,409,052	2,764,219
Western Isles	1,723,845	1,863,547

Area	1985-86	1986-87
Scotland	64,178,219	44,469,760
Berwickshire	446,429	201,135
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0	0
Roxburgh	1,306,156	951,730
Tweeddale	0	0
Clackmannan	0	0
Falkirk	0	0
Stirling	0	0
Annandale and Eskdale	1,759,500	1,382,490
Nithsdale	0	0
Stewartry	343,400	253,704
Wigtown	95,565	0
Dunfermline	0	0
Kirkcaldy	0	0
North East Fife	0	0
Aberdeen	2,260,303	0
Banff and Buchan	1,599,685	558,241
Gordon	1,800,235	1,838,802
Kincardine and Deeside	942,305	779,199
Moray	1,509,258	682,537
Badenoch and Strathspey	497,879	388,218
Caithness	750,997	663,077
Inverness	1,510,450	1,033,853
Lochaber	1,398,166	1,441,327
Nairn	218,689	181,633
Ross and Cromarty	3,474,516	3,178,298
Skye and Lochalsh	467,318	586,754
Sutherland	518,431	522,874
East Lothian	23,235	0
Edinburgh	0	0
Midlothian	0	0
West Lothian	0	0
Argyll and Bute	2,155,278	1,373,972
Bearsden and Milngavie	0	0
Clydebank	1,778,773	804,237
Clydesdale	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0

Area	1985-86	1986-87
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0
Cunninghame	0	0
Dumbarton	0	0
East Kilbride	0	0
Eastwood	0	0
Glasgow	32,675,646	21,891,239
Hamilton	0	0
Inverclyde	562,537	0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	0	0
Monklands	328,169	0
Motherwell	0	0
Renfrew	0	0
Strathkelvin	0	0
Angus	0	0
Dundee	0	0
Perth and Kinross	0	0
Orkney	804,942	684,343
Shetland	2,778,672	2,934,933
Western Isles	2,171,685	2,137,164

Area	1987-88	1988-89
Scotland	41,917,523	54,631,469
Berwickshire	225,306	91,417
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0	0
Roxburgh	1,115,301	1,124,908
Tweeddale	0	0
Clackmannan	0	0
Falkirk	0	0
Stirling	0	0
Annandale and Eskdale	1,337,917	1,557,353
Nithsdale	0	0
Stewartry	386,158	413,062
Wigtown	265,382	410,486
Dunfermline	0	0
Kirkcaldy	0	
North East Fife	0	0
Aberdeen	0	0
Banff and Buchan	617,681	246,862
Gordon	2,723,337	3,276,799
Kincardine and Deeside	1,267,315	1,617,844
Moray	982,346	614,211
Badenoch and Strathspey	462,702	384,299
Caithness	759,297	1,012,850
Inverness	1,157,218	1,370,584
Lochaber	1,396,801	1,800,599
Nairn	209,500	274,618
Ross and Cromarty	3,339,315	3,793,708
Skye and Lochalsh	789,606	985,932
Sutherland	643,801	796,808
East Lothian	0	0
Edinburgh	0	0
Midlothian	0	0
West Lothian	0	0
Argyll and Bute	1,709,251	1,586,284
Bearsden and Milngavie	51,224	124,971
Clydebank	786,456	1,031,201
Clydesdale	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0
Cunninghame	0	0
Dumbarton	0	0
East Kilbride	63,514	33,496
Eastwood	0	0
Glasgow	15,116,893	24,660,513
Hamilton	0	0
Inverclyde	0	0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	0	0
Monklands	0	0
Motherwell	0	0
Renfrew	0	0
Strathkelvin	0	0
Angus	0	0
Dundee	0	0
Perth and Kinross	0	0
Orkney	743,450	850,377
Shetland	3,172,405	3,677,667
Western Isles	2,595,347	2,894,620

Area	1989-90	1990-91
Scotland	65,296,686	57,963,694
Berwickshire	48,841	0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0	0
Roxburgh	1,339,141	1,321,472
Tweeddale	0	0
Clackmannan	0	0
Falkirk	0	0
Stirling	0	0
Annandale and Eskdale	1,684,048	1,504,110
Nithsdale	0	0
Stewartry	509,240	436,944
Wigtown	551,246	600,795
Dunfermline	0	0
Kirkcaldy	0	0
North East Fife	0	0
Aberdeen	0	0
Banff and Buchan	136,886	0
Gordon	3,788,264	3,792,482
Kincardine and Deeside	1,922,521	1,882,382
Moray	528,935	0
Badenoch and Strathspey	393,499	386,736
Caithness	1,229,421	1,330,831
Inverness	1,949,824	1,934,977
Lochaber	2,148,759	2,398,530
Nairn	344,628	350,804
Ross and Cromarty	4,154,244	4,231,891
Skye and Lochalsh	1,203,495	1,303,836
Sutherland	969,864	1,006,044
East Lothian	0	0
Edinburgh	0	0
Midlothian	0	0
West Lothian	0	0
Argyll and Bute	1,775,900	1,041,664
Bearsden and Milngavie	278,995	317,125
Clydebank	1,010,546	650,646
Clydesdale	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0
Cunninghame	0	0
Dumbarton	0	0
East Kilbride	0	0
Eastwood	0	0
Glasgow	30,697,621	24,536,123
Hamilton	0	0
Inverclyde	0	0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	0	0
Monklands	0	0
Motherwell	0	0
Renfrew	0	0
Strathkelvin	0	0
Angus	0	0
Dundee	0	0
Perth and Kinross	0	0
Orkney	776,917	783,399
Shetland	4,112,702	4,393,805
Western Isles	3,741,152	3,757,098

Area	1991-92	1992-93
Scotland	55,435,945	47,470,415
Berwickshire	0	0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0	0
Roxburgh	1,139,087	726,723
Tweeddale	0	0

Area	1991-92	1992-93
Clackmannan	0	0
Falkirk	91,878	123,120
Stirling	132,696	116,455
Annandale and Eskdale	1,288,127	1,151,985
Nithsdale	0	0
Stewartry	175,842	208,499
Wigtown	455,431	360,746
Dunfermline	0	0
Kirkcaldy	0	0
North East Fife	0	0
Aberdeen	0	0
Banff and Buchan	0	0
Gordon	3,808,288	3,598,836
Kincardine and Deeside	1,828,221	1,587,282
Moray	0	0
Badenoch and Strathspey	330,314	326,070
Caithness	1,249,076	1,161,797
Inverness	1,657,779	1,299,935
Lochaber	2,463,394	2,315,434
Nairn	306,917	246,839
Ross and Cromarty	4,159,560	4,060,836
Skye and Lochalsh	1,343,234	1,339,757
Sutherland	992,735	853,085
East Lothian	0	0
Edinburgh	526,144	535,752
Midlothian	0	0
West Lothian	0	0
Argyll and Bute	618,210	315,749
Bearsden and Milngavie	301,748	73,749
Clydebank	438,557	150,464
Clydesdale	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0
Cunninghame	7,774	10,760
Dumbarton	0	0
East Kilbride	61,626	100,892
Eastwood	8,108	11,583
Glasgow	22,687,417	17,400,837
Hamilton	0	0
Inverclyde	153,317	169,044
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	2,382	15,273
Kyle and Carrick	0	6,720
Monklands	0	0
Motherwell	0	0
Renfrew	28,488	36,735
Strathkelvin	0	0
Angus	0	0
Dundee	0	0
Perth and Kinross	29,303	27,462
Orkney	639,138	359,131
Shetland	4,603,666	4,592,216
Western Isles	3,907,490	4,186,649

Housing support grant (expressed in real terms)

Area	1979-80	1980-81
Scotland	463,067,442	418,454,542
Berwickshire	2,830,705	2,396,441
Ettrick and Lauderdale	3,745,022	3,215,882
Roxburgh	3,763,428	3,615,356
Tweeddale	627,569	524,018
Clackmannan	4,014,916	3,335,066
Falkirk	17,267,054	13,714,642
Stirling	4,187,529	3,513,681
Annandale and Eskdale	2,374,429	2,662,757
Nithsdale	2,490,726	1,659,882
Stewartry	1,190,812	1,240,182
Wigtown	2,271,036	2,117,633
Dunfermline	11,698,969	11,147,669
Kirkcaldy	13,677,804	11,919,566
North East Fife	3,441,789	3,051,566
Aberdeen	21,155,696	19,681,492
Banff and Buchan	10,775,996	10,077,863
Gordon	6,200,152	5,245,872
Kincardine and Deeside	2,831,050	2,518,673
Moray	9,195,128	8,072,142
Badenoch and Strathspey	896,383	862,260
Caithness	2,672,936	1,915,238
Inverness	5,341,147	4,260,615
Lochaber	4,036,568	3,347,026
Nairn	694,577	644,845
Ross and Cromarty	8,439,927	7,793,180
Skye and Lochalsh	743,705	630,418
Sutherland	1,464,550	1,337,080
East Lothian	10,250,768	9,283,212
Edinburgh	24,454,051	22,954,328
Midlothian	7,587,907	6,114,360
West Lothian	10,102,103	8,794,695
Argyll and Bute	7,401,504	6,538,941
Bearsden and Milngavie	1,008,760	840,549
Clydebank	7,700,399	7,394,994
Clydesdale	3,998,815	3,029,116
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	1,470,868	1,229,321
Cumnock and Doon Valley	4,302,634	3,323,926
Cunninghame	10,417,216	8,539,438
Dumbarton	6,505,334	5,143,857
East Kilbride	710,277	623,985
Eastwood	613,018	557,128
Glasgow	90,044,590	90,747,028
Hamilton	10,763,517	9,196,894
Inverclyde	12,157,747	11,260,801
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	7,778,880	7,644,020
Kyle and Carrick	9,596,226	7,979,950
Monklands	9,984,394	7,994,288
Motherwell	17,185,236	15,024,068
Renfrew	14,074,776	12,049,422
Strathkelvin	4,244,805	4,403,099
Angus	9,193,100	8,018,148
Dundee	16,796,932	15,773,677
Perth and Kinross	7,601,007	5,717,857
Orkney	2,330,724	2,023,101
Shetland	4,556,024	3,465,440
Western Isles	2,206,228	2,287,853

Area	1981-82	1982-83
Scotland	270,740,313	163,338,282
Berwickshire	1,736,410	1,071,241
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1,930,934	862,616
Roxburgh	2,570,770	1,819,721
Tweeddale	182,369	0
Clackmannan	2,147,161	1,076,550
Falkirk	7,405,733	2,332,707
Stirling	1,699,965	2,084,321
Annandale and Eskdale	2,128,740	2,165,266
Nithsdale	167	0
Stewartry	907,271	644,401
Wigtown	1,283,844	706,107
Dunfermline	4,682,465	1,066,384
Kirkcaldy	5,145,849	1,086,904
North East Fife	1,638,051	1,294,427
Aberdeen	15,943,354	11,067,549
Banff and Buchan	7,263,703	5,160,975
Gordon	3,978,506	3,497,747
Kincardine and Deeside	1,560,876	1,276,803
Moray	5,940,323	3,593,247
Badenoch and Strathspey	728,343	788,938
Caithness	1,465,128	1,275,977
Inverness	2,727,857	2,146,783
Lochaber	3,032,425	2,159,828
Nairn	421,400	321,677
Ross and Cromarty	7,022,763	5,453,354
Skye and Lochalsh	529,686	493,778
Sutherland	868,436	746,097
East Lothian	5,276,934	3,246,785
Edinburgh	13,159,819	3,634,000
Midlothian	2,996,048	1,415,486
West Lothian	3,648,917	0
Argyll and Bute	4,701,905	4,320,106

Area	1981-82	1982-83
Bearsden and Milngavie	323,733	0
Clydebank	5,493,742	3,437,156
Clydesdale	967,369	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	196,930	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	1,370,804	260,995
Cunninghame	4,589,542	1,163,360
Dumbarton	1,969,444	0
East Kilbride	163,983	0
Eastwood	25,857	0
Glasgow	73,746,536	58,216,532
Hamilton	5,424,230	2,410,259
Inverclyde	7,430,226	4,758,521
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	3,153,819	465,719
Kyle and Carrick	4,695,393	1,422,812
Monklands	7,110,570	5,030,562
Motherwell	9,595,022	5,146,117
Renfrew	3,655,844	0
Strathkelvin	2,573,744	1,871,611
Angus	4,180,266	1,907,296
Dundee	8,839,410	2,841,393
Perth and Kinross	2,189,491	0
Orkney	1,809,766	1,330,683
Shetland	4,389,022	4,144,073
Western Isles	2,119,420	2,121,418

Area	1983-84	1984-85
Scotland	97,228,171	95,496,286
Berwickshire	968,079	691,671
Ettrick and Lauderdale	502,828	152,402
Roxburgh	1,697,082	1,798,477
Tweeddale	0	0
Clackmannan	60,623	0
Falkirk	0	0
Stirling	27,511	0
Annandale and Eskdale	2,119,559	2,377,080
Nithsdale	0	0
Stewartry	558,336	510,216
Wigtown	343,796	284,615
Dunfermline	0	0
Kirkcaldy	0	0
North East Fife	416,868	124,220
Aberdeen	5,015,488	4,338,562
Banff and Buchan	3,281,814	2,761,248
Gordon	2,302,431	2,756,876
Kincardine and Deeside	1,309,105	1,213,470
Moray	2,675,793	2,543,415
Badenoch and Strathspey	694,239	692,370
Caithness	1,103,555	1,173,965
Inverness	1,671,480	1,854,400
Lochaber	1,796,899	1,741,686
Nairn	357,364	322,696
Ross and Cromarty	4,163,452	4,605,860
Skye and Lochalsh	435,372	561,221
Sutherland	600,704	664,934
East Lothian	1,414,584	557,493
Edinburgh	0	0
Midlothian	0	0
West Lothian	0	0
Argyll and Bute	3,439,774	3,280,637
Bearsden and Milngavie	0	0
Clydebank	2,498,395	2,521,405
Clydesdale	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0
Cunninghame	0	0
Dumbarton	0	0
East Kilbride	0	0
Eastwood	0	0
Glasgow	43,568,689	45,849,596
Hamilton	161,338	0
Inverclyde	2,511,648	1,652,156
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	603,189	0
Monklands	2,296,238	2,779,205

Area	1983-84	1984-85
Motherwell	1,396,933	0
Renfrew	0	0
Strathkelvin	440,216	3,943
Angus	244,157	0
Dundee	0	0
Perth and Kinross	0	0
Orkney	985,490	1,107,164
Shetland	3,243,903	3,927,507
Western Isles	2,321,239	2,647,798

Area	1985-861	1986-87
Scotland	86,419,017	57,973,536
Berwickshire	601,138	262,212
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0	0
Roxburgh	1,758,801	1,240,734
Tweeddale	0	0
Clackmannan	0	0
Falkirk	0	0
Stirling	0	0
Annandale and Eskdale	2,369,250	1,802,300
Nithsdale	0	0
Stewartry	462,404	330,744
Wigtown	128,683	0
Dunfermline	0	0
Kirkcaldy	0	0
North East Fife	0	0
Aberdeen	3,043,605	0
Banff and Buchan	2,154,052	727,758
Gordon	2,424,102	2,397,176
Kincardine and Deeside	1,268,858	1,015,812
Moray	2,032,288	889,798
Badenoch and Strathspey	670,418	506,105
Caithness	1,011,253	864,428
Inverness	2,033,893	1,347,795
Lochaber	1,882,697	1,879,003
Nairn	294,475	236,788
Ross and Cromarty	4,678,601	4,143,426
Skye and Lochalsh	629,266	764,929
Sutherland	698,092	681,651
East Lothian	31,287	0
Edinburgh	0	0
Midlothian	0	0
West Lothian	0	0
Argyll and Bute	2,902,184	1,791,195
Bearsden and Milngavie	0	0
Clydebank	2,395,202	1,048,453
Clydesdale	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0
Cunninghame	0	0
Dumbarton	0	0
East Kilbride	0	0
Eastwood	0	0
Glasgow	43,999,308	28,538,776
Hamilton	0	0
Inverclyde	757,483	0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	0	0
Monklands	441,895	0
Motherwell	0	0
Renfrew	0	0
Strathkelvin	0	0
Angus	0	0
Dundee	0	0
Perth and Kinross	0	0
Orkney	1,083,893	892,152
Shetland	3,741,614	3,826,161
Western Isles	2,924,277	2,786,139

Area	1987-88	1988-89
Scotland	51,828,731	62,996,816
Berwickshire	278,579	105,415
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0	0
Roxburgh	1,379,009	1,297,158
Tweeddale	0	0
Clackmannan	0	0
Falkirk	0	0
Stirling	0	0
Annandale and Eskdale	1,654,261	1,795,820
Nithsdale	0	0
Stewartry	477,463	476,311
Wigtown	328,130	473,341
Dunfermline	0	0
Kirkcaldy	0	0
North East Fife	0	0
Aberdeen	0	0
Banff and Buchan	763,729	284,662
Gordon	3,367,258	3,778,553
Kincardine and Deeside	1,566,966	1,865,574
Moray	1,214,617	708,261
Badenoch and Strathspey	572,106	443,144
Caithness	938,829	1,167,941
Inverness	1,430,837	1,580,452
Lochaber	1,727,068	2,076,313
Nairn	259,035	316,668
Ross and Cromarty	4,128,881	4,374,613
Skye and Lochalsh	976,305	1,136,901
Sutherland	796,025	918,818
East Lothian	0	0
Edinburgh	0	0
Midlothian	0	0
West Lothian	0	0
Argyll and Bute	2,113,396	1,829,181
Bearsden and Milngavie	63,336	144,107
Clydebank	972,410	1,189,102
Clydesdale	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0
Cunninghame	0	0
Dumbarton	0	0
East Kilbride	78,532	38,625
Eastwood	0	0
Glasgow	18,691,214	28,436,611
Hamilton	0	0
Inverclyde	0	0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	0	0
Monklands	0	0
Motherwell	0	0
Renfrew	0	0
Strathkelvin	0	0
Angus	0	0
Dundee	0	0
Perth and Kinross	0	0
Orkney	919,235	980,589
Shetland	3,922,506	4,240,803
Western Isles	3,209,005	3,337,854

Area	1989-90	1990-91
Scotland	70,644,473	57,963,694
Berwickshire	52,841	0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0	0
Roxburgh	1,448,816	1,321,472
Tweeddale	0	0
Clackmannan	0	0
Falkirk	0	0
Stirling	0	0
Annandale and Eskdale	1,821,971	1,504,110
Nithsdale	0	0
Stewartry	550,947	436,944
Wigtown	596,393	600,795
Dunfermline	0	0
Kirkcaldy	0	0

Area	1989-90	1990-91
North East Fife	0	0
Aberdeen	0	0
Banff and Buchan	148,094	0
Gordon	4,098,522	3,792,482
Kincardine and Deeside	2,079,975	1,882,382
Moray	572	0
Badenoch and Strathspey	425,726	386,736
Caithness	1,330,110	1,330,831
Inverness	2,109,514	1,934,977
Lochaber	2,324,742	2,398,530
Nairn	372,853	350,804
Ross and Cromarty	4,494,476	4,231,891
Skye and Lochalsh	1,302,061	1,303,836
Sutherland	1,049,296	1,006,044
East Lothian	0	0
Edinburgh	0	0
Midlothian	0	0
West Lothian	0	0
Argyll and Bute	1,921,346	1,041,664
Bearsden and Milngavie	301,845	317,125
Clydebank	1,093,310	650,646
Clydesdale	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0
Cunninghame	0	0
Dumbarton	0	0
East Kilbride	0	0
Eastwood	0	0
Glasgow	33,211,751	24,536,123
Hamilton	0	0
Inverclyde	0	0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	0	0
Monklands	0	0
Motherwell	0	0
Renfrew	0	0
Strathkelvin	0	0
Angus	0	07
Dundee	0	0
Perth and Kinross	0	0
Orkney	840,546	783,399
Shetland	449,532	4,395,805
Western Isles	4,047,552	3,757,098

Area	1991-92	1992-93
Scotland	48,083,080	39,400,746
Berwickshire	0	0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0	0
Roxburgh	988,001	603,185
Tweeddale	0	0
Clackmannan	0	0
Falkirk	79,692	102,191
Stirling	115,096	96,659
Annandale and Eskdale	1,117,274	956,155
Nithsdale	0	0
Stewartry	152,519	173,055
Wigtown	395,024	299,421
Dunfermline	0	0
Kirkcaldy	0	0
North East Fife	0	0
Aberdeen	0	0
Banff and Buchan	0	0
Gordon	3,303,168	2,987,057
Kincardine and Deeside	1,585,731	1,317,454
Moray	0	0
Badenoch and Strathspey	286,502	270,640
Caithness	1,083,402	964,299
Inverness	1,437,896	1,078,954
Lochaber	2,136,656	1,921,825
Nairn	266,208	204,878
Ross and Cromarty	3,607,848	3,370,519
Skye and Lochalsh	1,165,072	1,112,006
Sutherland	861,061	708,066
East Lothian	0	0

Area	1991-92	1992-93
Edinburgh	456,358	444,677
Midlothian	0	0
West Lothian	0	0
Argyll and Bute	536,213	262,074
Bearsden and Milngavie	261,725	61,212
Clydebank	380,388	124,886
Clydesdale	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	0
Cunninghame	6,743	8,931
Dumbarton	0	0
East Kilbride	53,452	83,741
Eastwood	7,033	9,614
Glasgow	19,678,223	14,442,806
Hamilton	0	0
Inverclyde	132,981	140,308
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	2,066	12,676
Kyle and Carrick	0	5,578
Monklands	0	0
Motherwell	0	0
Renfrew	24,709	30,490
Strathkelvin	0	0
Angus	0	0
Dundee	0	0
Perth and Kinross	25,416	22,794
Orkney	554,364	298,081
Shetland	3,993,049	3,811,569
Western Isles	3,389,211	3,474,946

Homelessness

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total cost of providing bed-and-breakfast accommodation for homeless persons for each year since 1979; and if he will provide a breakdown by local authority.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not held centrally.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's arrangements for consulting the Data Protection Registrar during the planning stage of any initiative involving the collection, use or disclosure of personal data; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* Officials are aware of the need to consult the registrar about proposed legislation or other initiatives that may affect or be affected by the Data Protection Act 1984, and will consult him as necessary when planning the collection, use or disclosure of automated personal data.

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy towards the noise insulation of schools in the vicinity of military airports.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* The School Premises (General Requirements and Standards) (Scotland) Regulations 1967-1979 place a duty on education authorities to secure that every part of a school building under their management shall have acoustic conditions and insulation against disturbance by noise appropriate to the use for which the part of the building is designed.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies he has commissioned into the effects on the teaching of pupils in schools in the vicinity of military airports as a result of aircraft noise.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* None.

Rents

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the increase in public sector rents in real and constant price terms since 1979 in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* The increase between average weekly public sector rents in 1979-80—expressed at 1992-93 prices, using GDP deflators and such rents in 1992-93—was as follows:

	£
Local Authority	11·94
SSHA/Scottish Homes	14·94
New Towns	11·18

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current average length of time it takes to have a case heard by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* The annual reports of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board give details of time taken to resolve cases. Copies of the reports are available in the Library. Separate details for Scottish cases are not available.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board may make an award in cases where the procurator fiscal has not brought charges, and the accused does not admit the offences.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* Yes.

Employment Training

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were eligible for employment training in each of the years since it started in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* The information is not available in the form requested. Those aged between 18 and 59 and registered as unemployed for six months or more are eligible for employment training. Certain groups are also eligible if they have not been unemployed for six months—for example, people with disabilities, lone parents, returners to the labour market, ex-regulars and people seeking skill shortage training; data is available in respect of the long-term unemployed only, as set out in the table.

Registered number unemployed for six months and over in Scotland

	Number
January 1989	150,500
January 1990	119,600
January 1991	104,800
January 1992	122,200

Hospitals (Assaults)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the hospitals in Scotland where *(a)* staff and *(b)* patients have been assaulted by other patients or members of the general public in the last six months; and if he will provide the statistics of these assaults.

Mr. Stewart: This information is not held centrally.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mature Students

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has of the number of mature students who have paid national insurance contributions and who are not entitled to claim social security benefits.

Miss Widdecombe: People who are in full-time education and have previously paid national insurance contributions are entitled to claim contributory social security benefits apart from unemployment benefit. It is estimated that there are about 280,000 full-time students in England over age 21, but the number of these who have paid national insurance contributions is not known.

Maxwell Pensioners

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if section 58B of the Social Security Act 1990 will apply to each of the Maxwell-owned pension schemes.

Miss Widdecombe: Section 58B will apply to any salary-related pension scheme that is being wound up, or where the employer goes into liquidation.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the name of the body which adjudicates on appeals against decision on levels of disability living allowance; how many people serve on this body; what are their names; how many of these persons have medical experience; how often the body meets; how many cases are currently waiting to be heard; and how many have been waiting for, respectively, over three months and over six months.

Mr. Scott: Disability appeal tribunals adjudicate on appeals against decisions on disability living allowance. The administration of these tribunals is the responsibility of the president of the independent tribunal service, his honour Judge Holden, and the hon. Member may wish to contact his office direct to obtain this information.

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the reasons for the delays in hearing appeals on disability living allowances.

Mr. Scott: There are no delays in hearing appeals on disability living allowance. If the hon. Member wishes to obtain more detailed information on the time taken to clear appeals he may receive this from the office of his honour Judge Holden, the president of the independent tribunal service, which is responsible for the administration of disability appeal tribunals.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many people in receipt of severe disablement allowance at the last date for which figures are available became entitled because 196 days of continuous incapacity commenced before their 20th birthday; and what proportion of these were *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women;

(2) how many people in receipt of severe disablement allowance at the last date for which figures are available became entitled because of previous receipt of non-contributory invalidity pension; and what proportion of these were *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women;

(3) how many people in receipt of severe disablement allowance at the last date for which figures are available became entitled because they were deemed 80 per cent. disabled by virtue of receipt of attendance allowance, mobility allowance or war pensioners' mobility supplement; and what proportion of these were *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women;

(4) how many people in receipt of severe disablement allowance at the last date for which figures are available became entitled because they were deemed 80 per cent. disabled by virtue of a previous assessment under the industrial injuries or war pensions schemes; and what proportion of these were *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women;

(5) how many people in receipt of severe disablement allowance at the last date for which figures are available became entitled because they were deemed 80 per cent. disabled by virtue of receipt of a vaccine damage payment; and what proportion of these were *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women;

(6) how many people in receipt of severe disablement allowance at the last date for which figures are available became entitled because they were deemed 80 per cent. disabled by virtue of being registered blind or partially sighted; and what proportion of these were *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women;

(7) how many people in receipt of severe disablement allowance at the last date for which figures are available became entitled because they were deemed 80 per cent. disabled by virtue of receipt of an invalid tricycle, car or car allowance; and what proportion of these were *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women;

(8) how many people in receipt of severe disablement allowance at the last date for which figures are available became entitled because they were classified as 80 per cent. disabled by adjudicating medical authorities; and what proportion of these were *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women;

(9) how many people were in receipt of severe disablement allowance at the last date for which figures are available; and what proportion of these were *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is in the table. The latest date for which information is available is March 1990. The information is based on a 1 per cent. sample and has been rounded to he nearest 1,000. It is statistically unreliable to express the separate entries as proportions or percentages.

Severe disablement allowance beneficiaries as at 31 March 1990

Condition	*Male*	*Married women*	*Single women*[1]	*Total*
Under 20 when incapacity arose	20,000	1,000	15,000	35,000
Links with NCIP/HNCIP/SDA	1,000	1,000	1,000	3,000
MOB A/AA awarded	5,000	15,000	5,000	25,000
Blind/partially sighted	[4]	2,000	[4]	2,000
Other passport benefit[2]	1,000	1,000	1,000	3,000
Adjudicating medical authorities	5,000	10,000	4,000	18,000
Others	[3]81,000	43,000	76,000	199,000
Total	112,000	71,000	101,000	285,000

Notes:
[1] Single women includes single, divorced and widows.
[2] Other passport benefits include invalid tricycle, car or private car allowance, vaccine damage payments, industrial injuries and war pensions.
[3] Other condition relates to those transferred from NCIP/HNCIP with continuous entitlement.
[4] Figure less than 500.
Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many people awarded severe disablement allowance in the last year for which figures are available became entitled because they were deemed 80 per cent. disabled by virtue of receipt of attendance allowance, mobility allowance or war pensioners' mobility supplement; and what proportion of these were *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women;

(2) how many people awarded severe disablement allowance in the last year for which figures are available became entitled because they were deemed 80 per cent. disabled by virtue of receipt of a vaccine damage payment; and what proportion of these were *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women;

(3) how many people awarded severe disablement allowance in the last year for which figures are available became entitled because they were deemed 80 per cent. disabled by virtue of receipt of an invalid tricycle, car or car allowance; and what proportion of these were *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women;

(4) how many people awarded severe disablement allowance in the last year for which figures are available became entitled because 196 days of continuous incapacity commenced before their 20th birthday; and what proportion of these were *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women;

(5) how many people awarded severe disablement allowance in the last year for which figures are available became entitled because they were deemed 80 per cent. disabled by virtue of a previous assessment under the industrial injuries or war pensions schemes; and what proportion of these were *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women;

6) how many people awarded severe disablement allowance in the last year for which figures are available became entitled because they were deemed 80 per cent. disabled by virtue of being registered blind or partially sighted; and what proportion of these were *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women;

(7) how many people awarded severe disablement allowance in the last year for which figures are available became entitled because they were deemed 80 per cent. disabled by adjudicating medical authorities; and what proportion of these were *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women;

(8) how many people awarded severe disablement allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and what proportion of these were *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is in the table. It is based on a 1 per cent. sample and has been rounded to the nearest 1,000. It is statistically unreliable to express the separate entries as proportions or percentages.

Severe Disablement Allowance Awards during the period 3 April 1989—31 March 1990

Condition	*Male*	*Married Women*	*Single Women*[1]	*Total*
Under 20 when incapacity arose	5,000	[3]—	4,000	10,000
Links with NCIP/HNCIP/SDA	[3]—	[3]—	n/a	[3]—
MOB A/AA awarded	1,000	3,000	1,000	5,000
Blind/partially sighted	n/a	[3]—	n/a	[3]—
Other passport benefit[2]	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	1,000
Adjudicating medical authorities	1,000	2,000	1,000	4,000
Total	8,000	6,000	6,000	20,000

n/a = Not available.
[1] Single women includes single, divorced and widows.
[2] Other passport benefits include invalid tricycle, car or private car allowance, vaccine damage payments, industrial injuries and war pensions.
[3] Figures less than 500.
Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people were refused severe disablement allowance in the last year for which figures are available *(a)* on grounds of age, *(b)* through failure to pass the incapacity conditions, *(c)* through failure to pass the 80 per cent. disability test, *(d)* through failure to satisfy residence and presence conditions and *(e)* for other reasons; and what proportion in each category were (i) men, (ii) single women and (iii) married women.

Mr. Scott: The information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people applied for severe disablement allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and what proportion of these were *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women.

Mr. Scott: In 1991-92 almost 64,500 claims were received. Information by gender is not available.

State Pensions

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners receive a state pension in Wales.

Miss Widdecombe: In September 1991, 529,000 pensioners received a state pension in Wales.

Notes:

(1) Figure rounded to nearest thousand.

(2) Figure does not include those in receipt of graduated retirement benefit only.

Pension Law

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to announce the names of the committee that will examine possible changes in pension law.

Miss Widdecombe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State expects to make an announcement soon.

Benefits

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the *(a)* administrative costs, *(b)* benefit expenditure and *(c)* administrative expenditure as a proportion of expenditure, for (i) supplementary benefit and (ii) single payments for the last three years of their operation.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is in the table:

£ million

	Year		
	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
(a) Administrative costs[1 2]	839	929	1,106
(b) Benefit expenditure [1]	7,377	7,962	7,952
(c) (a) as a percentage of total expenditure	10·2	10·4	12·2

[1] Supplementary benefit and single payments.
[2] Estimate.

Single Payments

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number and percentage of eligible applicants who were awarded single payments in the last three years of their operation; and if he will provide a breakdown by *(a)* region and *(b)* DSS office.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the precise form requested. Single payments could be awarded to people entitled to supplementary benefit. National figures for the number of payments made in each year, and the total number of people receiving supplementary benefit is in the table.

The number of people who received awards is likely to be significantly lower than the number of payments in any given year, since any one person may have received more than one award.

Similar information for each office can be derived from information held in the Library.

	Number of payments (000)	*Number of recipients of supplementary benefit (million)*
1985-86	4,375	4·8
1986-87	4,230	5·1
1987-88	2,750	5·0

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of claims for single payments which were initially rejected by DSS offices which were the subject of awards following appeal for the last three years of its operation.

Mr. Scott: The information is in the table.

Single payments awarded following Social Security Appeal Tribunal hearings

	Number
1986	13,920
1987	20,866
1988	31,034

Social Fund

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total expenditure of providing *(a)* maternity payments, *(b)* funeral expenses and *(c)* cold weather payments for the past three years expressed (i) in cash terms, (ii) in cash terms at 1990-91 prices and (iii) as a percentage of total social security expenditure; and if he will provide a breakdown by (1) region and (2) local DSS office.

Mr. Scott: Not all the information requested is readily available and it could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost. Such information as is available will be placed in the Library shortly.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps his Department is taking to draw the social fund to the attention of those it has identified as likely to be applicants; and what is the total expenditure involved.

Mr. Scott: Information about the Fund is included in general guides to social security published by the Department. There are also two specific leaflets on the fund, numbered SFL2 and SB16. These leaflets have been revised and clarified recently. It is not possible to isolate expenditure on the social fund from other departmental publicity spending.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans his Department has to alter the eligibility criteria used in making discretionary awards under the social fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on 8 June at columns 6-8.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what are *(a)* the administrative costs, *(b)* benefit expenditure and *(c)* administrative costs as a proportion of expenditure, for (i) the social fund, (ii) income support and (iii) income support and social fund combined, for each of the social fund's operation;

(2) what was the total expenditure of administering the social fund expressed *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* at 1990-91 prices and *(c)* as a percentage of gross social fund expenditure; and if he will provide a breakdown by (i) region and (ii) local DSS office;

(3) what is the total expenditure of the social fund expressed as a percentage of *(a)* total social security expenditure and *(b)* total running costs for each year of its operation.

Mr. Scott: Information on social security expenditure and administration costs for 1988-89 to 1990-91 is in the Library. Details of social fund administration costs for 1991-92 are not yet available. Information about administrative costs by region or DSS local office is not available.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications initially rejected by *(a)* social fund officers and *(b)* social fund inspectors were the subject of awards following review for each year of its operation; and if he will provide a breakdown by (i) region and (ii) local DSS office.

Mr. Scott: The information requested about social fund officers' decisions is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Regarding social fund inspectors' decisions, I am informed by the social fund commissioner that information by each local office is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The table summarises the data collected by DSS region.

Region	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	[1]*1991-92*
London North	—	0	10	25
London South	—	1	8	9
Midlands	—	3	3	14
North East	—	3	17	26
North West	—	1	11	26
Scotland	—	0	9	47
Wales and South West	—	1	8	21

[1] Data for 1991-92 is provisional.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total budget for *(a)* the social fund, *(b)* budgeting loans, *(c)* crisis loans and *(d)* community care grants and the percentage of each budget which was actually spent for each year of its operation; and if he will provide a breakdown by (i) region and (ii) local DSS office.

Mr. Scott: Information on social fund allocations and expenditure is in the Library. The allocations for loans are not subdivided for budgeting and crisis loans.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that social fund applicants and potential applicants are made aware of the role of the social fund inspectors;

(2) what is the estimated cost and time scale for implementing any planned improvements to the computer system which are deemed necessary for the efficient operation of the social fund and the production of reliable performance data;

(3) what is the level of departmental manpower absorbed by the social fund expressed *(a)* in numbers and *(b)* as a percentage of total departmental manpower for each year of its operation.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Loans and Grants

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applicants were refused *(a)* budgeting loans, *(b)* crisis loans and *(c)* community care grants for each year of their operation; and if he will provide a breakdown by (i) region and (ii) local DSS office.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the performance targets in working days which were set for *(a)* budgeting loans, *(b)* crisis loans and *(c)* community care grants and the actual average clearance times achieved in each of the years for which information is available; and if he will provide a breakdown by region.

Mr. Scott: Performance targets and clearance of social fund applications are a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mortgage Interest Payments

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will change the procedures of his Department in respect of mortgage interest payments, so that mortgage lenders receive payments by the due date, instead of one month in arrears to prevent mortgagors being threatened with repossession.

Mr. Burt: The Council of Mortgage Lenders gave an assurance last December that lenders would not seek possession if the mortgage interest due was paid direct from income support. The present direct payment scheme began on 25 May.

Mortgage payments are usually made at the end of each calendar monthly period. Similarly, the direct payment of the income mortgage interest allowance is made to lenders at the end of each four-weekly period. While the payment date may be changed, that of itself would not have the adverse effect suggested. Consequently, we see no reason to change the procedures.

Priority Groups

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to ensure greater consistency within and between local DSS offices in the treatment of priority groups.

Mr. Scott: Social fund officers are already provided with a framework of directions and guidance which allows them to meet highest priority needs whenever they occur. Copies are available in the Library.

HEALTH

HIV Statistics

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have been *(a)* tested and *(b)* proven to be HIV positive in the Sunderland, Durham and Hartlepool health authority areas in each year since 1988-89.

Mr. Sackville: Records are not routinely kept by district health authorities of the total numbers of people tested for HIV and a detailed breakdown is therefore not available. In respect of Hartlepool, Sunderland, Durham, North West Durham and South West Durham health authorities, 23 individuals have been reported as infected with HIV to the Public Health Laboratory Service's communicable disease surveillance centre since April 1988; 14 of these were in the 12 months to March 1992. The AIDS (Control) Act provides that where the number of newly infected HIV persons is fewer than 10 the district health authority is not required to provide numbers.

Heart Disease

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what form figures exist for the incidence of coronary heart disease broken down to local authority districts or wards; and if she will publish the number of cases for both men and women in each local authority district or ward over the past five years.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the number of cases of coronary heart disease for both men and women for each health district within the North East Thames region over the past five years.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the incidence of heart disease in the community is not available centrally. The table shows the numbers of deaths for ischaemic heart disease in each health authority in the North East Thames region. Due to boundary changes in 1991, figures for Islington are no longer available separately.

Ischaemic Heart Disease (410-414)

	1987 deaths	*1988 deaths*	*1989 deaths*	*1990 deaths*	*1991 deaths*
North East Thames RHA					
Male	5,881	5,538	5,401	5,225	5,341
Female	4,426	4,404	4,233	4,193	4,234
F01 Basildon and Thurrock					
Male	429	392	382	366	412
Female	263	293	296	258	272
F02 Mid Essex					
Male	403	371	381	393	355
Female	285	288	248	265	266
F03 North East Essex					
Male	602	578	522	500	559
Female	451	459	436	454	470
F04 West Essex					
Male	360	371	342	328	413
Female	269	279	246	275	262
F05 Southend					
Male	553	514	516	464	462
Female	445	437	397	377	415
F06 Barking, Havering and Brentwood					
Male	761	688	751	729	742
Female	559	538	573	576	564
F07 Hampstead					
Male	148	133	117	104	125
Female	119	104	108	114	111
F08 Bloomsbury					
Male	206	193	210	166	281
Female	144	134	142	155	247
F09 Islington					
Male	218	221	227	202	[1]—
Female	181	187	158	161	[1]—
F10 City and Hackney					
Male	245	251	216	251	231
Female	211	187	195	185	197
F11 Newham					
Male	336	282	296	270	283
Female	220	239	210	203	227
F12 Tower Hamlets					
Male	266	243	240	222	211
Female	193	181	164	141	160
F13 Enfield					
Male	397	382	355	341	333
Female	315	308	289	298	318
F14 Haringey					
Male	267	239	227	240	230
Female	240	224	219	196	199
F15 Redbridge					
Male	384	323	324	346	382
Female	248	286	266	304	228

	1987 deaths	1988 deaths	1989 deaths	1990 deaths	1991 deaths
F16 Waltham Forest					
Male	306	357	295	303	322
Female	283	260	286	231	298

[1] Please note there were certain boundary changes in 1991 to Bloomsbury and Islington.
Source: OPCS Death Registrations.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list in rank order the incidence of coronary heart disease, as a percentage of the male and female population, of each health district in the North East Thames region; and if she will break down these figures to local authority districts or wards.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available precisely in the form requested. The table shows the death rate per head of population for each district in North East Thames regional health authority. Figures on incidence within the community are not collected centrally.

Estimated percentage of deaths by cause and by sex
1987 to 1991

	Ischaemic heart disease (410-414)				
	1987 Per cent. of deaths	1988 Per cent. of deaths	1989 Per cent. of deaths	1990 Per cent. of deaths	1991 Per cent. of deaths
North East Thames RHA					
Male	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3
Female	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2
F01 Basildon and Thurrock					
Male	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3
Female	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2
F02 Mid Essex					
Male	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3
Female	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2
F03 North East Essex					
Male	0·4	0·4	0·3	0·3	0·4
Female	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3
F04 West Essex					
Male	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3
Female	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2
F05 Southend					
Male	0·4	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3
Female	0·3	0·3	0·2	0·2	0·2
F06 Barking, Havering and Brentwood					
Male	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3
Female	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·2
F07 Hampstead					
Male	0·3	0·3	0·2	0·2	0·2
Female	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2
F08 Bloomsbury					
Male	0·3	0·3	0·4	0·3	[1]—
Female	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	[1]—
F09 Islington					
Male	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·2	[1]—
Female	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	[1]—
F10 City and Hackney					
Male	0·3	0·3	0·2	0·3	0·2
Female	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2
F11 Newham					
Male	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3
Female	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2
F12 Tower Hamlets					
Male	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3
Female	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2
F13 Enfield					
Male	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3
Female	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2
F14 Haringey					
Male	0·3	0·3	0·2	0·3	0·2
Female	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2
F15 Redbridge					
Male	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3
Female	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·2
F16 Waltham Forest					
Male	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3
Female	0·3	0·2	0·3	0·2	0·3

Please note 1991 figures based on 1990's populations.

[1] Due to boundary changes in Bloomsbury and Islington Health Authorities the rates cannot be calculated for 1991.

Maternity Services

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what conclusions she has reached as a result of her review of maternity services; and what steps she has so far taken to implement those conclusions.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will be responding to the report of the Health Select Committee on maternity services, second report, Session 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 22 May at column *306*.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the progress of the research commissioned by her Department into the effects of post-abortion trauma.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department funded a major study by the Manchester research unit of the Royal College of General Practitioners into the long and short-term sequelae of abortion. The study ran from 1976 to the end of 1990. A number of papers have been either published or are in the public arena having been presented through conferences. Only one of these papers, that on the psychiatric sequelae of abortion, addressed the effects of post-abortion trauma. The paper was presented to the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Royal College of General Practitioners on 7 November 1990. The final conclusions of this part of the study are expected to be published later this year.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department is conducting as to the stage of development at which the unborn child experiences pain; what steps she is taking to reduce the level of pain experienced by an unborn child which is aborted; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department is not currently supporting any such research. The abortion procedure is a matter for the clinical judgment of the doctor concerned in discussion with the patient.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many national health service abortions have been performed in each year for the last 10 years; and how many applications for national health service abortions have been refused over the same period.

Mr. Sackville: The number of abortions performed in the National Health Service in England, Wales and Scotland in each of the last 10 years for which full figures are available is shown in the table. Information on the number of applications for an NHS abortion which were refused is not available centrally.

Number of National Health Service abortions England, Wales and Scotland 1981-1990

Year	*Number of NHS abortions*[1]
1981	72,430
1982	75,144
1983	75,694
1984	78,776
1985	80,168
1986	83,800
1987	86,828
1988	88,439
1989	89,980
1990	93,312

[1]These figures include those abortions carried out in England and Wales under an agency agreement (operations carried out in non-NHS premises on NHS patients).

Hospital Assaults

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the hospitals where *(a)* staff and *(b)* patients have been assaulted by either patients or members of the general public in the last six months; and if she will provide the statistics of these assaults.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Limbless Ex-Service Men

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will meet members of the British Limbless Ex-Sevicemen's Association to discuss her Department's guidance on priority treatment for their disabilities.

Mr. Yeo: We have no plans to meet members of the British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association at present.

Hospitals

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* hospitals have been closed, *(b)* beds have been closed, *(c)* hospitals have been opened and *(d)* beds have been opened, since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: Information is not available centrally in the form requested.

Smear Tests

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the time between a smear test taking place and the result being given to the patient.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities have made significant progress in ensuring that women receive the results of a smear test within the national one month target. At December 1990, around two thirds were meeting the target, by December 1991 more than 96 per cent. of health authorities were reporting cervical smear results within one month or less. We expect regional health authorities to monitor the performance of districts to ensure this high level of performance continues.

NHS Trust Federation

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the relative roles of the National Health Service Trust Federation and regional health authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: The National Health Service Trust Federation is a body set up by the trusts themselves to represent them. It has no statutory role.

Regional health authorities are statutory bodies which have a key strategic role in the management structure of the reformed NHS. They are the Government's agents for managing change and for ensuring the implementation of the Government's policies on health.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list each major type of service and treatment provided by the national health service and indicate which of these services are provided by all district health authorities.

Mr. Sackville: It is the responsibility of each district health authority to secure a comprehensive range of services for their resident population based on a local assessment of their health needs. A list of the services provided by each of the authorities for their resident population is not held centrally.

NHS Spending

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current level of annual NHS spending as a proportion of gross domestic product excluding capital receipts from the disposal of NHS properties.

Mr. Sackville: Total United Kingdom national health service spending is estimated at 5·8 per cent. of gross domestic product for 1992-93. Excluding capital receipts the figure is estimated to be 5·7 per cent.

Human Growth Hormone

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make it her policy to continue Department of Health funding for a specialist counsellor at the Institue for Child Health for those suffering from Creutzfeld-Jakob disease;

(2) what measures she intends to take to ensure that former recipients of human growth hormone treatment will be able to obtain life assurance;

(3) whether all people who were injected with human growth hormone treatments have been contacted and made aware of the possible implications of contaminated treatment.

Mr. Yeo: In the United Kingdom and Eire 1,910 patients were treated with pituitary derived human growth hormone between 1959 and 1985 when the link with Creutzfeld-Jacob Disease—CJD—was discovered. Action taken to trace these patients has revealed that 1,777 are still alive. Of these, 1,689 are believed to be currently resident in Great Britain of whom some 1,580—over 90 per cent.—have been linked to a general practitioner's list. Efforts continue to trace the remaining patients and separate arrangements have been put in hand for tracing patients resident in Northern Ireland and Eire.

In June 1991 the Department funded a trial by the Institute of Child Health at Great Ormond Street Hospital of arrangements for notifying and counselling these patients on the risk of CJD, in consultation with their general practitioner. Regional health authorities have agreed to adopt similar procedures in notifying and counselling the remaining patients resident in their regions. The counsellors used by the regional health authorities will be trained at the Institute of Child Health. Central funding has been extended for this purpose and to enable the Institute to continue to investigate the health and welfare needs of these patients.

By now we estimate that some 500 patients have been notified and offered counselling. We have asked for reports on the progress of the counselling programme. If these indicate that obtaining life assurance is a problem, we will consider an approach to the industry.

Residential Care

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will institute a policy requiring the constant availability of beds in nursing homes for people in *(a)* local auhtority residential homes and *(b)* private residential homes.

Mr. Yeo: No. Forcing either local authorities or private home owners to keep beds empty as suggested would neither serve the interests of prospective residents nor be an efficient use of resources.

Greenwich Healthcare Trust

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will defer any decision on the Greenwich Healthcare Trust application until after the consultation on the acute services strategy for the Greenwich health district has been completed;

(2) if she will defer any decision on the Greenwich Healthcare Trust application until the long-term future of the Queen Elizabeth military hospital is known;

(3) if she will publish the business plan for the Greenwich Healthcare Trust when she receives it.

(4) if she will make it her policy to disclose any advice or comments which she receives from the South East Thames regional health authority on the Greenwich Healthcare Trust application.

Dr. Mawhinney: In reaching a decision on whether to grant trust status to Greenwich Healthcare, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will take into account the outcome of consultation on all of the relevant issues surrounding the trust application. Requests for copies of responses to consultation on the trust application should be directed to the South East Thames regional health authority. It is not our policy to publish confidential advice from regional health authorities to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. With effect from 1993-94, all established trusts will publish their annual business plans. Financial summaries produced by potential trusts are confidential. It is for the trust project team to decide whether to publish these summaries.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what role her Department plays in the appointment of chief executives or general managers of national health service trusts; and what role is played by the region and the district health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: Regions, as co-ordinators of regional trust development programmes, are closely involved in assessing the leadership and management of proposed trusts and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, considers carefully the views of regions and districts. The appointment of chief executives of NHS trusts is a matter for the chairman and non-executives of each trust.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance her Department gives about the reappointment of chief executives or general managers of hospitals to those positions when they become national health service trusts; and what information she has on how many have done so.

Dr. Mawhinney: The chief executive of a trust is appointed by the chairman and non-executive directors. All chief executive posts must be advertised except where the trust's project manager is appointed. The hon. Member may wish to approach trust chairmen for the additional information he requires.

Jennifer Bennett

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to reply to written representations from the Matthew Trust sent on 14 April concerning the disclosure of Miss Jennifer Bennett's identity and medical records to the press.

Mr. Sackville: We are investigating the issues raised by the Matthew Trust and will send a response as soon as possible.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 18 June 1992

TRANSPORT

Aircraft Engines

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research has been commissioned into the environmental impact and property damage implications of aircraft engines capable of powering 600-seater aircraft.

Mr. Norris: There are no 600-seater aircraft yet in production. The regulatory authorities have not yet been provided with information about any such aircraft which would enable them to undertake environmental assessment. However, all new types of civil aircraft must receive a certificate of airworthiness, covering a wide range of safety and environmental standards, before they are permitted to operate.

A5-M11 Trunk Road

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the latest position as regards the consultation study by Acer Consultants Ltd. in connection with its work on the alignment of an east/west trunk route regarding the section between the A5 and the M11.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We expect to receive a report from our consultant this autumn. This will provide information about route options on which we hope to consult the public in 1993.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what was the first degree obtained by each of the chief executives of DVOIT and the Transport Research Agency; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded;

(2) how much was spent on events and publicity surrounding the launch of DVOIT and the Transport Research Agency as agencies; and whether the cost in each case was borne by the parent department or the new agency.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The chief executives of the DVOIT agency and the Transport Research Laboratory will be writing to the hon. Member.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the maximum salary payable, including performance related element, and the length of time of the contract, of each of the chief executives of DVOIT and the Transport Research Agency.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The chief executive of the DVOIT agency has been appointed from 1 April 1992 for five years. The maximum salary that the chief executive DVOIT agency could be paid in 1992-93 on the basis of the current scale is £46,671 but a further general increase is expected on 1 August 1992. In addition, the chief executive is eligible for special non pensionable performance related bonus payments of up to 10 per cent. of salary.

The chief executive of the Transport Research Laboratory has been appointed from 11 November 1991 for five years. The maximum salary that the executive could be paid in 1992-93 is currently £63,000. This figure is subject to annual review in the light of the Government's decisions on the recommendations of the top salaries review body for the senior open structure. In addition the chief executive is eligible for non pensionable performance related bonuses up to a maximum of 10 per cent. of salary for the years to which the bonuses relate.

Red Routes

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the additional cost of *(a)* initiating, *(b)* administering each year and *(c)* policing each year the scheme of red routes in London as announced on 11 June.

Mr. Norris: I expect the implementation of the red route network announced on 11 June to cost in the region of £50 million (over the next five years) and the cost of administration to be of the order of £1·5 million a year subject to variation in workload. When the system becomes fully operational the annual cost of the additional police officers and traffic wardens will be about £25 million. However, the final cost will depend on the extent to which the boroughs' future involvement in parking enforcement releases existing traffic warden resources.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements relating to regulated parking, pedestrian crossings, cycle facilities and bus lanes or bus preference traffic schemes are possible under red route legislation and not possible under other provisions for traffic and highway management.

Mr. Norris: The power for the Secretary of State to designate a coherent network across London and to ensure the co-ordinated implementation of effective measures on it.

Orbital Trunk Road, M25

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to build an outer orbital trunk road outside the M25.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: None.

Colne Foulridge Bypass

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects construction of the Colne Foulridge bypass to begin.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: This is Lancashire county council's scheme. Its timing is a matter for the council, although the council is hoping for exceptional central Government funding.

Selby Bypass

Mr. Michael Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress on the Selby bypass following the conclusion in 1991 of the local public inquiry into the line of the route.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The joint decision of the Secretaries of State for Transport and the Environment is awaited. I am aware of the need for an early decision, but in view of their statutory position it would be wrong for me to forecast when an announcement can be made. Of course, they have to consider all evidence before them, including the inquiry inspector's report.

Wheel Clamping

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what review is being undertaken of the law relating to wheel clamping of vehicles by private companies in England.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The law on wheel clamping on private land is a matter for the courts. But the recent ruling of the Scottish High Court of Judiciary will be examined carefully by my Department—with other relevant Government Departments—with a view to the position in England.

WALES

Radionuclides

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he has taken in relation to the conclusions on page seven of the report commissioned by his Department from the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority on a post-Chernobyl survey of radionuclides in Wales from August to October 1986.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The report to which the hon. Gentleman refers is one of many dealing with the effects of radioactive deposition from Chernobyl within the United Kingdom as a whole. Since the accident there have been a wide range of laboratory and field studies to improve our understanding of the behaviour of the fallout from Chernobyl in the affected areas, including north Wales.

The recommendations for further work in this particular report are being followed up. The Welsh Office is currently funding a project examining the dynamics of caesium in soils in upland Wales. As part of its wide ranging research programme the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has also funded work in the migration of radiocaesium in peat, as well as into the presence of strontium 90 in crops before and after the Chernobyl accident.

Following the Chernobyl accident a comprehensive monitoring programme of all foodstuffs likely to be affected was undertaken in Wales. The results indicated that radioactivity levels were generally well below those at which action was necessary to protect the safety of the food chain—with the exception of sheepmeat from certain parts of north Wales. As a result, sheep movement and marketing restrictions remain in force.

Access to Records

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what conclusions he has reached on the implications of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Graham Gaskin for people seeking access to personal records for which he has responsibility; and what action he intends to take.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department has consulted relevant agencies in Wales about how existing legislation and practice on the subject of access to social work records might need to be modified in the light of the judgment given by the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Graham Gaskin.

I am considering, together with other Ministers, what action should now be taken.

Dentistry

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if the approval by his Department for the West Glamorgan family health services authority to begin the immediate checking of standards at dental surgeries in the county will include the aim of reducing the rates of cross-infection; and if this initiative will now be extended to the whole of Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The inspection of general dental practitioners premises is a matter for individual family health services authorities to decide as part of their management responsibility for general dental services. The composition of the inspection checklist is stipulated in guidance issued to FHSAs and includes consideration of cross-infection control.

Penylag County Primary School

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will review his financial regulations to enable the Penylag county primary school, Deeside to be extended; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: No. In accordance with practices agreed with the local authority associations it is for local authorities to determine the distribution of the resources made available to them between services and projects in the light of their view of local needs and priorities.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit Penylag county primary school and meet the governors, staff and the parent-teachers association.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no present plans to do so.

School Playing Fields

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will earmark cash in the Sports Council grant aid to enable the Sports Council to list the current stock of school playing fields land.

Mr. David Hunt: As indicated in the Government's policy statement "Sport and Active Recreation" published last November, I will be considering with the Sports Council for Wales whether the register of all playing fields in England currently being compiled should be extended to Wales.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales for what reasons the construction of the alternative feeding grounds for wading birds was omitted from the re-advertisement of the specifications of the tender to construct the proposed Cardiff bay barrage in the supplement to the *Official Journal* of the European Communities dated 5 June; and what difference it made to the total estimated construction cost.

Mr. David Hunt: The construction of the alternative feeding grounds for wading birds was omitted from Cardiff Bay Development Corporation's re-advertisement since the Select Committee required the provision for the feeding grounds to be removed from the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill. The indicative value of £112 million given in the advertisement should have been reduced by the £5·7 million cost of the feeding ground to £106 million. As I indicated in my answer to the hon. Gentleman on 16 June the estimated value in the advertisement is intended to be purely indicative of the scale of the project.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales for what reasons it was decided to increase the volume of dredged material in the specification for the construction of the Cardiff bay barrage from 1,000,000 m^3 to 1,700,000 m^3, and for sandfill from 1,300,000 m^3 to 1,500,000 m^3 between the original advertisement in the supplement to the *Official Journal* of the European Communities dated 14 November 1990 and the most recent re-advertisement dated 5 June 1992.

Mr. David Hunt: Following completion of ground investigations and detailed design of the barrage, allowance has been made for removal of all soft material from beneath the locks, sluices and Penarth Link, and removal of some soft material from beneath the embankment. This is required to avoid problems during construction and to ensure the complete structure integrity of the finished structure. It has resulted in the increases in dredging and sandfill quantities.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the increase since November 1990 in cost and in percentage terms of the proposed Cardiff bay barrage exclusive of the cost of the alternative feeding grounds.

Mr. David Hunt: If the cost of the alternative feeding grounds had been excluded from the November 1990 prequalification notice, the cost of the Cardiff bay barrage would have been £82 million at 1988-89 prices. The equivalent figure for the latest notice is £106 million at 1991-92 prices. Estimated construction costs exclusive of the alternative feeding grounds have therefore risen by £24 million or 29 per cent. over a period of some three years.

Manufacturing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what special measures he plans to encourage manufacturing industry in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Development of manufacturing industry in Wales is a high priority. A wide range of schemes is available to encourage investment, research and development, and job creation. Specific initiatives have been taken to strengthen supplier networks, encourage technology transfer and build on the record levels of inward investment that have been achieved.

Banking Jobs

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the loss of banking and finance jobs in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Employment Department figures show that between 1989 and 1991 employment in the banking, insurance and finance sector in Wales increased by almost one third to 90,000.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

War Crimes

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Attorney-General how much money has been spent on investigations under the War Crimes Act 1991; and how many individual cases have been investigated.

The Attorney-General: The War Crimes Act 1991 came into effect on 9 May 1991. Costs associated with investigations in England and Wales in 1991-92 were £1,003,072. This includes running costs and direct expenditure by the CPS in providing advice and other support to the investigators. The corresponding figure for Scotland is £300,000. No individual investigations have been completed. The inquiry is focusing on the case identified in the Hetherington/Chalmers report which appear most susceptible to criminal investigation.

No figures are yet available for the expenditure in the current year.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Attorney-General if he will now indicate when the opinion of the Advocate General and the judgments of the court will be available on the case relating to Sunday trading.

The Attorney-General: The Advocate-General will give his opinion on 8 July. The court will give public notice in due course after 8 July of the date when it will give judgment.

European Court of Justice

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on his attendance at the European Court of Justice on 2 June.

The Attorney-General: On 2 June the European Court of Justice heard references by English courts concerning the compatibility of the Shops Act 1950 and Community law. I addressed the court on behalf of the United Kingdom and argued that the Act was compatible with Community law.

"Final Exit"

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration the Director of Public Prosecutions is giving to instituting proceedings under section 2 of the Suicide Act 1961 against the publishers or distributors of "Final Exit"; and what criteria the Director of Public Prosecutions applies to such cases.

The Attorney-General: In December 1991 the acting director of Public Prosecutions considered a complaint relating to the distribution of "Final Exit" by Derek Humphrey. He concluded that there were no grounds for proceeding against either the publishers or distributors for an offence contrary to section 2 of the Suicide Act 1961. In reaching this decision the acting director took into account the High Court's consideration in *Attorney General v. Able and Others* [1984] 1 ALL ER p. 277 of the circumstances in which supply of a publication may contravene section 2. It is for the police to investigate any particular supply of "Final Exit" which might constitute an offence.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the number of cases heard by each magistrates court in Greater London and Essex for each week during the past 12 months.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information is not available centrally in the form requested. However, the Home Office collects and publishes the numbers of people proceeded against annually by petty sessional division and commission of the peace area in "Criminal statistics England and Wales". The 1990 publication, the latest available, is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the number of court sittings for each magistrates court in Greater London and Essex for each week during the past 12 months.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not available centrally in the form requested. The annual number of bench sittings for north-east London is 10,220 in 1990 (the latest year available) and for Essex is 10,217 in 1991. It is possible to provide the numbers of individual bench sittings only at disproportionate cost.

Small Claims Courts

Mr. Madden: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if small claims courts are required to issue documents to plaintiffs and defendants by recorded or registered post; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The county court rules 1981 require that any document which is to be served on a person should be served personally or by first class post. There is no requirement for documents to be sent by recorded or registered post.

Children

Mr. Olner: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many children have been taken abroad by one parent against the wishes of the other parent in the last year of record.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No statistics are kept of the total number of children taken abroad unlawfully by one parent against the wishes of the other. However, in the year 1991, the child abduction unit of the Lord Chancellor's Department, which acts as the central authority for applications in England and Wales under the Hague convention of 1980 and the European convention of 1980, processed 108 applications involving 149 children who were said to have been wrongfully removed to other contracting states under those conventions.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Wildlife Management

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much is allocated by the Overseas Development Administration to special training programmes in wildlife management techniques and if he will break these figures down into the amounts spent on *(a)* annual capture and translocation, *(b)* management of crop-raiding animals, *(c)* veterinary diagnosis and management of diseases, *(d)* operation of culling programmes, *(e)* the development of village-level use of wild species, *(f)* management of sports hunting and other associated activities, *(g)* implementation of reintroduction programmes for both plants and animals and *(h)* programmes to exterminate damaging introduced and invasive species.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Information is not readily available in the form requested by the hon. Member. However, many of the projects ODA supports in wildlife management include elements for training for developing country personnel. Some examples include:

(i) £12 million for Kenya's protected areas Wildlife Services project to protect rare and endangered species;

(ii) £474,000 for the Zoological Society of London to protect black rhinos and other flora and fauna and prevent damage to crops and livestock by predators in the Aberdares, Kenya;

(iii) £91,000 in support of community education programme to promote conservation and sustainable resource use in Zimbabwe;

(iv) £30,000 for training and equipment for the Ecological Research Institute at Etosha, Namibia to develop remote sensing techniques for effective environment monitoring and management of wildlife parks.

We also support training in the United Kingdom on environmental subjects; of the 485 broad-based environment awards in 1990-91, 12 were for specific wildlife management training courses at a cost of approximately £140,000.

Bahrain

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid Her Majesty's Government provides for Bahrain *(a)* in real terms and *(b)* as a percentage of gross national product.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Seal Pups

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Russian Government concerning slaughter of baby seal pups; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Russian authorities are well aware of public concern in the United Kingdom about seal culling. The EC banned the import of harp and hooded seal pup skins in 1983. The United Kingdom persuaded the Community to make the ban indefinite in 1989.

Public Record Office

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many papers have been withdrawn from the Public Record Office by his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In each of the past five years the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has temporarily recalled the following numbers of files from the Public Record Office.

	Number
1991	2,425
1990	2,113
1989	3,316
1988	3,324
1987	2,851

All Foreign and Commonwealth Office files temporarily recalled from the Public Record Office are held for the minimum period of time necessary for official business, and are returned to the Public Record Office thereafter.

Bosnia-Herzogovina

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken towards protection of the chemical plant in Tuzla, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, against the risks of war damage leading to environmental damage.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The best protection for all sites in Bosnia-Herzegovina would be a durable ceasefire. We therefore wholeheartedly support Lord Carrington's and the United Nations efforts to bring this about.

Slovenia

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to ensure that United Nations sanctions against Serbia do not harm the economy or the people of Slovenia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As a United Nations member state, Slovenia has a legal obligation to implement the sanctions imposed on Serbia and Montenegro by Security Council Resolution 757. It is for the Slovenian authorities to take steps, consistent with this resolution, to protect the interests of their economy and people should they be affected by Slovenian implementation of the sanctions.

Patricia Cahill

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to secure the release of Patricia Cahill from prison in Thailand.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British embassy in Bangkok submitted Patricia Cahill's petition for a pardon from His Majesty the King of Thailand to the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 4 May 1992. The embassy strongly supported the petition on the grounds of Miss Cahill's youth and immaturity at the time the offence was committed.

Entry Applications

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications for entry clearance at the deputy high commission in Karachi have been outstanding for more than one month.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 12 June 1992]:* There are 745 applications which have been outstanding for more than one month. Of these, 528 are non-settlement cases where the post requires further information or the applicants have failed to attend for interview. Of the remaining 217 settlement cases, 50 have been referred to the Home Office for decision, 82 applicants are waiting first interview, and 85 are applicants who have been interviewed but from whom further documents are required.

EDUCATION

School Toilets

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will update the 1977 survey conducted by his Department and the Welsh Office on how many schools in England and Wales have outside toilets in use by pupils.

Mr. Forth: I have no plans at present to update the information contained in the 1977 "A Study of School Building" which gave the number of schools with outside toilets on a sample basis.

School Governing Bodies

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to strengthen the representative base of school governing bodies by opening up all places on every body to election by parents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: We have no plans to alter the carefully constructed balance of membership of school governing bodies established by the Education (No. 2) Act 1986.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will review the procedure for appointment of school governors by minor authorities to prevent such authorities from removing well-established school governors and replacing them with political appointees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: We have no plans to review the procedure for the appointment of school governors by minor authorities.

The Education (No. 2) Act 1986 allows those appointing governors to remove them at any time. The courts have, however, taken the view that in doing so they must act reasonably. There is therefore a remedy in law for a governor who considers that he has been unreasonably removed.

Surplus School Places

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the latest figure for the cost of surplus school places for *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools.

Mr. Forth: The average premises-related cost of maintaining a school place is estimated to be £150 a year for a primary school and £250 a year for a secondary school at 1991-92 prices. The amount that can be saved by removing surplus places will, however, vary considerably according to the particular circumstances.

School Repairs

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the differences in the arrangements for *(a)* aided schools and *(b)* county schools in using school

budget money to support governors' money for paying for decorations or repairs approved for 85 per cent. grant from his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: County schools are not eligible for grant from the Department for repairs or decorations. Governors of county and voluntary aided schools with delegated budgets may, subject to any conditions in their LMS scheme, spend the budget share of their school as they see fit for the purposes of the school. In the voluntary aided schools, such purposes could include external repairs to school buildings, including decoration, which are their responsibility under the provisions of section 15 of the Education Act 1944 and eligible for grant.

PRIME MINISTER

Official Visits

Q8. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Prime Minister when he will next pay an official visit to Kinsley.

The Prime Minister: I shall be making further visits to many parts of the country and hope to include Kinsley among them.

Ministerial Responsibilities

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement about ministerial responsibilities for HMSO, the Central Office of Information, Chessington Computer Centre and CCTA—the Government Centre for Information Systems.

The Prime Minister: The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Minister of Public Service and Science) will assume responsibility for these bodies from the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The transfer of responsibility for the Central Office of Information and Her Majesty's Stationery Office will take place on Monday 22 June. The transfer of CCTA will take place once the necessary Transfer of Functions Order permits. Responsibility for Chessington Computer Centre will be transferred as soon as the administrative arrangements have been completed.

These four bodies are largely self-contained units engaged in providing services, mostly on a repayment basis, and mainly to other civil service departments and agencies. They will take their place alongside the Civil Service college, the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency and the Occupational Health Service, which are also self-contained units largely serving civil service departments and agencies and which are already the responsibility of the Chancellor of the Duchy. Bringing these seven units under one Minister is designed to improve their effectiveness and help to provide even better value for those who use those services.

Millennium Fund

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister what benefits are planned to flow to London from the millennium fund.

The Prime Minister: It is far too early to say. But the millennium fund, which will commemorate the start of the 21st century, will be one of the areas funded by the national lottery.

Private Sector Forum for London

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what functions will be carried out by the Private Sector Forum for London; and whether its proceedings will be subject to public scrutiny;

(2) when he intends to announce the membership of the proposed Private Sector Forum for London; and if he is inviting nominations from representative bodies in the capital.

The Prime Minister: The forum will promote London internationally as a business, tourist and cultural centre. We are still considering the detailed arrangements for the forum. We will announce our conclusions in due course.

Rail Travel

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions he has made an official visit by train since becoming Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: I do so when ever the opportunity arises but for practical and security reasons I am unable to travel often by train.

Royal British Legion (Training Centre)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what is the most appropriate Department to sponsor the Royal British Legion's bid to PERIFRA II for the establishment of a training centre in Tidworth for providing specific training for members of the armed forces and their families, so as to prepare them for continuing careers in civilian life; what action he will take in consultation with the Royal British Legion; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 17 June 1992]:* The aims of the British Legion proposal are to provide employment opportunities and training for the wives and dependants of service personnel, for ex-service personnel, and for the local community in Tidworth. The Ministry of Defence has the matter under consideration.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Accountants

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation to prevent a reporting accountant acting for debenture holders from acting as a receiver.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no such plans.

Compact Discs

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received regarding the pricing of compact discs.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department has received a small number of letters about the price of compact discs and other aspects of the market for recorded music in the course of the last few months. The Office of Fair Trading has also received correspondence on this issue and is keeping the market under review.

Aerospace Exports

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the value of exports by the aerospace industry to Britain for each of the years from 1979, giving the financial value under the headings of airframe, engines etc.

Mr. Needham: The available information is given in the following table. Figures for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

United Kingdom Aerospace exports

(£ millions)

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Aircraft				
Aircraft—new	799	1,194	1,030	1,157
—other	275	877	942	569
Spacecraft	1	1	23	0
Aircraft parts	1,722	2,406	2,498	3,229
Guided weapons	210	315	182	81
TOTAL	3,008	4,794	4,674	5,036
Propulsion devices				
Reciprocating	4	5	6	6
Reciprocating—parts	26	36	44	34
Jet and turbo—new	504	1,085	1,133	912
—other	491	474	478	461
Other than jet	8	11	6	7
Jet and turbo parts	737	794	827	817
TOTAL	1,770	2,405	2,494	2,237
Equipment				
Aircraft tyres	11	8	10	7
Radio communications	40	54	57	54
Aircraft radar	41	57	42	29
Aircraft instruments	177	219	225	183
Seating and furnishings	16	48	53	58
Parachutes, rotochutes	7	5	5	6
Catapults, launching gear	5	3	6	5
Ground trainers	118	166	131	89
Spcialised machinery	1	3	6	8
Mechanical handling equipment	2	3	5	3
Transmission shafts	12	14	17	11
Other equipment	163	182	234	238
TOTAL	593	764	790	692
TOTAL AEROSPACE	5,370	7,962	7,958	7,966

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Steel

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the value and tonnage of exports of hot rolled coil by the British steel industry for each of the years from 1979.

Mr. Needham: The information is given in the table.

United Kingdom exports of hot rolled coil steel

	Value (£ million)	*Weight (thousand tonnes)*
1979	23·6	161·0
1980	9·3	55·8
1981	10·3	79·8
1982	7·3	49·3
1983	26·5	146·9
1984	35·4	198·5
1985	39·6	199·7
1986	42·7	231·1
1987	50·4	257·6
1988	68·9	332·4
1989	90·4	390·3
1990	110·3	493·2
1991	124·0	656·0

Source: Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau from the Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the value and tonnage of imports of *(a)* HRC and *(b)* other categories of steel by the British steel industry for each of the years from 1979.

Mr. Needham: The available information is given in the table.

United Kingdom imports of steel

	Hot rolled coil steel		*Other steel*	
	Value (£ million)	*Weight (thousand tonnes)*	*Value (£ million)*	*Weight (thousand tonnes)*
1979	92·8	526·9	901	3,257
1980	97·7	525·1	1,173	4,102
1981	63·9	379·9	842	2,935
1982	99·4	524·5	1,056	3,312
1983	104·5	520·6	930	2,824
1984	101·1	482·5	1,132	3,071
1985	128·2	574·6	1,274	3,175
1986	157·7	694·1	1,331	3,424
1987	165·7	707·7	1,403	3,560
1988	149·0	583·0	1,828	4,447
1989	155·1	567·0	2,144	4,715

	Hot rolled coil steel		Other steel	
	Value (£ million)	Weight (thousand tonnes)	Value (£ million)	Weight (thousand tonnes)
1990	166·6	631·9	2,053	4,526
1991	118·4	494·3	2,065	4,815

Source: Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau from the Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Vehicles

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the value and numbers of motor cars, vans and lorries *(a)* imported and *(b)* exported for each of the years from 1979.

Mr. Needham: The information is given in the table.

United Kingdom trade in motor cars, vans and lorries[1]

	Imports		Exports	
	Value (£ billion)	Numbers (thousands)	Value (£ billion)	Numbers (thousands)
1979	2·85	1,132	1·40	552
1980	2·38	941	1·40	485
1981	2·40	861	1·44	453
1982	3·16	1,007	1·45	407
1983	4·08	1,172	1·39	364
1984	4·14	1,120	1·39	296
1985	4·67	1,172	1·72	294
1986	5·45	1,198	1·70	250
1987	5·76	1,153	2·38	310
1988	7·83	1,506	2·49	346
1989	8·87	1,521	3·23	444
1990	8·20	1,287	4·07	540
1991	6·05	887	5·02	744

[1] Motor cars, vans and lorries are defined as items 781 and 782 of the Standard International Trade Classification.
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Textiles

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the value of textiles exported and imported for each of the years from 1979.

Mr. Needham: The information is given in the table.

United Kingdom trade in textiles (£ million)

	Exports			Imports		
	Textile fibres[1]	Other textiles[2]	Total textiles	Textile fibres[1]	Other textiles[2]	Total textiles
1979	316	1,339	1,655	476	1,691	2,167
1980	313	1,363	1,676	376	1,544	1,920
1981	298	1,203	1,501	376	1,762	2,138
1982	314	1,192	1,506	411	1,928	2,338
1983	375	1,285	1,660	476	2,320	2,796
1984	428	1,485	1,913	597	2,705	3,302
1985	420	1,709	2,129	663	3,032	3,695
1986	373	1,712	2,085	547	3,162	3,709
1987	397	1,886	2,283	658	3,472	4,130
1988	440	1,935	2,374	688	3,636	4,323
1989	498	2,205	2,703	681	3,770	4,451
1990	495	2,447	2,942	549	3,936	4,485
1991	466	2,349	2,816	453	3,739	4,191

[1] Textile fibres are defined as division 26 of the Standard International Trade Classification.
[2] Other textiles consist of textile yarn, fabrics, made-up articles not elsewhere specified and related products, and are defined as division 65 of the Standard International Trade Classification.
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Telecommunications Council

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Telecommunications Council on 5 June.

Mr. Leigh: The principal item for discussion was a proposal for a Council decision on an action plan for the introduction of advanced television services in Europe. The action plan proposes a subsidy of up to 850 mecu to accelerate development of a market for wide-screen and high-definition television services broadcast by satellite or cable and using MAC (Multiplex Analogue Components) transmission standards. The United Kingdom supported by several other member states, rejected the sum of 850 mecu as unacceptably high. The United Kingdom further stated that a convincing business case for any subsidy had yet to be presented. No Council conclusions were drawn from the discussion. Consideration of the action plan will continue.

The otherwise light agenda included a brief discussion on the long awaited postal services green paper. The United Kingdom strongly welcomed its stated objective of seeking the maximum deregulation consistent with the maintenance of affordable efficient universal letter delivery services. The Council also adopted the open network provision (ONP) directive on leased lines and ONP recommendations on integrated services digital networks (ISDN) and packet switched data services. A resolution on ISDN was also adopted.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress has been made in the work of the renewable energy advisory group.

Mr. Eggar: In August 1991, the former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy, the hon. Colin Moynihan, announced the formation of a ministerial advisory group to spearhead the Government's review of renewable energy strategy. Since then the group has considered evidence submitted by a wide range of

interested external parties, as well as drawing upon a technical assessment being conducted by the energy technology support unit.

The group will complete its work under the chairmanship of Dr. Martin Holdgate, the Director General of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. I look forward to receiving the report from the group in the autumn and I expect it to be published.

Environmental Incentives

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much money has been allocated under the Better Environmental Awards for Industry scheme in each year since its establishment.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

The scheme is run by the Royal Society of Arts. My Department has made grants towards the RSA's scheme costs as follows:

	£
1988-89	25,000
1989-90	29,200
1990-91	33,000
1991-92	150,000

The Department acted as a promoter of the Better Environment Awards for Industry scheme in its first year, 1987, but made no grant in that year towards scheme costs.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Potato Marketing

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with his European counterparts regarding potato marketing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: None. We shall do so once the European Commission makes its proposals for a common régime, expected shortly.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the potato marketing system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I have received a number of representations both for and against continuation of the existing arrangements. We shall not take a decision about the future of the potato marketing scheme until the European Commission publishes its proposals for a common regime for potatoes.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the first degree obtained by the chief executives of ADAS and the Central Science Laboratory; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded.

Mr. Curry: The chief executive of ADAS was awarded a graduateship from the Royal Institute of Chemistry, equivalent to a first class honours degree in chemistry. The chief executive of the Central Science Laboratory obtained a first class honours degree in biochemistry from University college, London.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the maximum salary payable, including performance-related element, and the length of time of the contract of the chief executives of ADAS and the Central Science Laboratory.

Mr. Curry: The chief executive of ADAS was appointed in June 1991 and the chief executive of the Central Science Laboratory (CSL) in May 1991, each for a period of five years. They receive the standard civil service pay at grade 2 and grade 3 respectively. Neither participates in civil service performance pay. Instead, both are eligible for an annual, non-pensionable performance bonus, linked to the achievement of predetermined targets, of up to 12·5 per cent. of salary at the end of the financial year. The maximum payable to the chief executive of ADAS in 1992-93 would therefore be £73,125, while for the chief executive of CSL the 1992-93 maximum would be £57,713.

Sheep and Beef Quotas

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set up an agency to administer sheep and beef quotas, to provide opportunities for new entrants and to avoid unused quotas in less favoured areas.

Mr. Curry: Decisions on the administration of quotas in the beef and sheep sectors will be taken following the adoption of detailed implementing rules by the EC Commission. These rules are expected to include provision for new entrants and for unused quota not to be lost.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set up a procedure to arbitrate on special cases involving beef and sheep quotas which acquire a significant capital value when such quotas are transferred, sold, changed, or when the farm's ownership or management changes, or its operations cease.

Mr. Curry: I secured provision in the agreement on beef and sheep quotas for the specific problems linked to the transfer of quota by tenants to be addressed in the detailed Community implementing rules.

Beef Special Premium

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will apply the 90-head limit on the beef special premiums per age group of animals, and not on a per farm basis.

Mr. Curry: The way in which the 90-head limit applies will depend upon the precise wording of regulations implementing the reform package on beef. This has not yet been agreed.

Environmental and Forestry Schemes

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to make the maximum possible use of the environmental and forestry schemes which form part of the CAP reform package.

Mr. Curry: We welcome the positive environmental aspects of the CAP reform agreement. We have a year to draw up our implementation plans for both the agri-environment and forestry measures and we are considering how best to respond to the new regulations.

Companion Animals

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who will be in charge of checking and authorising the entry procedures of companion animals entering the United Kingdom after 1 January 1993 at the port of entry.

Mr. Soames: Arrangements for the legal importation of companion animals have to be made in advance, and so are not dependent on controls or checks at the port of entry. Selective customs intervention which will continue after January 1993 will maintain the effectiveness of controls on illegal imports.

Set-aside Schemes

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for what use non-saleable crops are likely to be permitted under the new set-aside proposals; and when he expects detailed conditions to be published by the relevant authority that will determine environmental options available to national Governments.

Mr. Curry: I hope that the draft legal texts implementing the Council agreement will be adopted this month. The Commission will then have to table detailed implementing regulations and proposals on the use of set-aside land to grow industrial crops. Until these are in place, it is not possible to provide authoritative guidance about national management conditions or the precise range of crops that might be permitted on land set-aside under the new arable regime.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 11 June, *Official Report,* column *274,* on set-aside, what environmental conditions he considers to be vital elements for the new set-aside arrangements agreed in the common agricultural policy reform package in May.

Mr. Gummer: The appropriate environmental conditions will vary depending on the individual circumstances of each member state. The most important factors are to ensure that set-aside land is properly managed and that the management conditions offer scope for it to be used in ways which will benefit the environment. We shall be developing our own national requirements in the light of these factors.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is investigating the possibility of issuing scanning equipment to detect the onset of BSE in cattle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Scanning by nuclear magnetic resonance has been experimentally applied to laboratory animals incubating spongiform encephalopathy. But this technique does not at the moment appear to represent a practicable means of diagnosing BSE under field conditions.

International Whaling Commission

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will name the members of the British delegation to the forthcoming International Whaling Commission meeting in Glasgow.

Mr. Gummer: The United Kingdom delegation will comprise 13 members. It will be led by Mr. A. R. Burne, the United Kingdom Commissioner to the International Whaling Commission, his deputy will be Mr. B. S. Edwards. The delegation will also include a number of advisers, as well as representatives of the non-governmental organisations Care for the Wild (Dr. W. Jordan), the World Wide Fund for Nature (Mr. J. Martin-Jones) and the Environmental Investigation Agency (Dr. R. Reeve), all belonging to the Cetacean Group of Wildlife Link.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Stamp Duty

Mr. Channon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the reasons for his decision not to extend stamp duty relief on home purchases.

Mr. Nelson: When my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced the increase in the stamp duty threshold last December, he made it clear that it was a temporary measure for eight months to help bring forward transactions in the housing market. As I explained in the debate on Second Reading of the Finance Bill on 2 June, *Official Report,* col 770, the cost of any extension of the threshold increase would be substantial and would make it more difficult to meet our public expenditure priorities.

Mr. Moate: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the actual revenue that will be foregone in 1992-93 financial year as a result of the temporary arrangements for the relief from stamp duty of property conveyances up to £250,000 in value; what is his estimate of the likely yield from such stamp duties in the year 1992-93 once the temporary relief is ended; and what is the likely yield from properties valued at more than £250,000 in the current financial year.

Mr. Nelson: The estimated cost in 1992-93 of the temporary increase in the stamp duty threshold from £30,000 to £250,000 is £290 million. The forecast yield in 1992-93 from stamp duty on land and property below the temporary threshold which becomes chargeable from 20 August is £370 million. The yield in 1992-93 if the threshold were £250,000 throughout the year would be about £300 million. Not all of this will necessarily come from properties valued at more than £250,000. Duty on the grant of a new lease is charged by reference to the premium and the rent payable.

During the debate on the Finance Bill on 2 June I referred to the total yield from stamp duty on houses amounting to almost £1·4 billion. It may be helpful if I clarify that the total yield of all stamp duty in 1992-93 is estimated to be £1·5 billion, whereas the yield in respect of land and property in a normal year would be almost £1 billion.

Overseas Pensions

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what regulations govern the payment of taxation on pensions paid from abroad to residents of the United Kingdom;

(2) whether people living in the United Kingdom who are in receipt of pensions from overseas are liable to taxation.

Mr. Dorrell: The general position is that those who are resident for tax purposes in this country are liable to tax on pensions which arise overseas, subject to a statutory deduction of one-tenth. In some cases, for example those who are not domiciled in this country, the one-tenth deduction does not apply and the liability is determined by the amount of the overseas pension which is remitted to this country. Certain overseas pensions, for example German and Austrian pensions payable to victims of Nazi persecution, are statutorily exempt from tax. The relevant legislation for these provisions is in sections 19, 58, 65, 68 and 330, Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.

Relief may also be due under the terms of a double taxation agreement. This will depend on the precise terms of the agreement between the United Kingdom and the country from which the pension is paid.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the number of pensioners in the United Kingdom in receipt of pensions from the United States of America; and what is the total sum of money involved.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is not available.

Inland Revenue Interviews

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place a copy of the Inland Revenue manual "Accounts Investigation Interviews", in the Library.

Mr. Dorrell: I have done so.

Taxation

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the yield of restricting *(a)* the personal tax allowance, *(b)* the married couple's allowance and *(c)* the age allowances and the major tax reliefs to the basic rate of tax in 1992-93.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest estimates of the direct revenue yields in a full year with the 1992-93 levels of allowances and tax rates are as follows:

	£ million
Personal tax allowances (excluding married couple's allowance)	1,100
Married couple's allowance	340
Age allowances[1]	nil
Relief on contributions to personal pensions[2]	[3]170
Relief on employee's contributions to occupational pension schemes	290

[1]The higher levels of the age-related personal and married couple's allowances given to those aged 65 and over subject to the income limit.

[2]Including relief for retirement annuity premia and free standing additional voluntary contributions.

[3]This estimate is subject to a wide margin of error.

No account has been taken of possible behavioural changes resulting from such restrictions.

Inheritance Tax (Exemption)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how often his Department carries out monitoring of land where agreements have been reached on the granting of exemptions of inheritance tax for public access; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Regular monitoring of undertakings given in return for the conditional exemption of land from inheritance tax is carried out, on behalf of Inland Revenue, by the appropriate heritage advisory agency. As part of the regular monitoring, owners are required to submit an annual report to the agency. In addition the Inland Revenue separately review all such cases at five yearly intervals.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the number of agreements for the exemption of inheritance tax to granting public access that have been broken for each year since 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The appropriate heritage advisory agencies monitor the operation of undertakings on public access. Any issues arising are resolved in discussion between the agencies and landowners. Where issues could not be resolved in this fashion, the agencies would notify the Inland Revenue. To date there has been no occasion on which they have had to do this.

If a land owner breaks an undertaking given in respect of conditionally exempt land, inheritance tax is chargeable on the current value of the property. This provides a powerful incentive to honour the terms of the undertaking.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what conditions are imposed on the length of time from agreement on exemptions on inheritance tax for the granting of public access to land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Public access to land which has been conditionally exempted from inheritance tax is required as soon as detailed negotiations have been completed.

Auditing

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 11 June, *Official Report*, columns *233-34*, what are the criteria on which the decision is taken to propose provisions for the auditing of non-departmental public bodies by *(a)* the Comptroller and Auditor General and *(b)* private accountancy practices; what evaluation has been carried out of the respective merits of the two kinds of audit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Comptroller and Auditor General is normally appointed auditor for non-departmental public bodies which are wholly or mainly financed from public funds, except in the case of bodies whose operations are of a commercial nature and where it is appropriate for the audit to be carried out by private sector auditors qualified under the Companies Act. In the latter case it is usual to provide for the Comptroller and Auditor General to have a right of inspection of the books and records of the company.

Betting Duty

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the loss to tax revenue in the current financial year of the reduction in pools betting duty which preceded the setting up of the Foundation for Sport and the Arts.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* The cost is estimated to be £20 million in 1992-93.

Benefits and Expenses

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the estimated number of taxpayers above the current threshold for P11Ds and below the current threshold for the last available figures.

Mr. Dorrell *[pursuant to his reply, 8 June 1992, Official Report, column 21]:* Unfortunately the estimates given related to numbers of taxpaying employees whose total income was above the current threshold for P11Ds and whose total income was below it. The P11D threshold is applied to earnings, including benefits in kind. About 12·6 million taxpaying employees have earnings above the threshold and 5·8 million have earnings below it. The estimate of 0·8 million taxpaying directors is unaffected.

SCOTLAND

Modern Languages

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make resources available to regional and island education authorities in order to increase the teaching of modern languages in primary schools; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will give for regional and island education authorities, the cost of introducing the teaching of modern languages in primary schools; and if he will make a statement;

(3) by which year he expects the teaching of modern languages in primary schools to be universally available throughout Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Foreign language teaching will be made available in the curriculum of all Scottish primary schools within the life-time of this Parliament. Plans to implement this policy are now being prepared and a further announcement will be made in due course.

Physical Education

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to reclassify physical education as a practical subject in Scottish secondary schools.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is the responsibility of local authorities, in consultation with headteachers, to determine the deployment of teaching staff in circumstances which may call for formation of smaller groups for certain purposes. Development of the school curriculum may mean that some classes formerly regarded as non-practical may now contain practical elements; the converse may also be true. The most recent statistics on average class sizes in physical education are set out in SOED Statistical Bulletin C7/1992/3 issued in February this year, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the first degree obtained by the chief executive of the Scottish Agricultural Science Agency; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded.

Sir Hector Monro: The director and chief executive of the Scottish Agricultural Science Agency, Dr. Robert K. M. Hay gained a first-class honours degree in chemistry from the university of Aberdeen in 1967.

Golf

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to promote Scotland worldwide as the home of the sport of golf; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* I have today written to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the House Library.

Forests

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to promote the creation of forest reserves in areas where less than 20 per cent. of the original forest remains, and to surround such areas with tracts of modified forests.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* The Government attach considerable importance to the conservation of the remaining ancient and semi-natural woodlands in Britain. These woodlands are protected by the felling controls in the Forestry Act 1967, as strengthened in 1985, and the Forestry Commission offers grants and guidance to encourage their effective management. In addition, woodlands which are sites of special scientific interest are protected under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. These measures are proving effective and we are not convinced that further initiatives of the kind proposed by the hon. Member are needed.

Cancer

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the average cancer mortality rates in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 12 June 1992]:* The figures requested are given in the table.

Malignant neoplasm (ICD[1] 140-208) death rates per 100,000 population
Scotland
1982-91

	Male	*Female*
1982	294	252
1983	295	258
1984	297	260
1985	299	265
1986	301	268
1987	306	268
1988	305	274
1989	309	278
1990	308	279
[2]1991	307	276

[1] International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision.
[2] Provisional.

Rates for cancers for specific sites are given in the Annual Reports of the Registrar General for Scotland, copies of which are in the House of Commons Library.

Broadleaf Plantings

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, column *134*, concerning the planting of native broadleaf species, what information is held centrally on non-native species planted since 1984.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* Detailed information by areas and species, both for Forestry Commission planting and for private sector planting approved by the Commission for grant aid, has been held centrally on computer since May 1991. These records indicate that current broadleaved planting mainly comprises native species. Information at the same level of detail in respect of private sector planting before that date is held in individual files in the commission's local offices. There is no evidence, however, that the pattern of broadleaved planting as between native and non-native species has differed over the past few years.

Council House Building

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of council houses built in Scotland in each year since 1979; and if he will provide a breakdown by local authority.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 June 1992]:* The information is set out in the table.

Number of new dwellings completed by local authorities 1979 to 1991

Areas	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
SCOTLAND	4,755	5,048	3,770	2,342	2,311	2,120	1,989	1,733	1,710	1,933	1,474	1,010	996
Borders													
Berwickshire	14	11	29	—	—	27	16	22	17	—	31	—	29
Ettrick and Lauderdale	34	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	14
Roxburgh	4	12	—	51	45	43	8	8	4	28	18	—	—
Tweeddale	—	56	—	10	—	—	—	—	6	54	4	8	6
Central													
Clackmannan	155	132	—	—	—	1	23	30	—	35	—	—	—
Falkirk	—	23	54	66	20	78	147	56	74	—	—	—	—
Stirling	9	42	168	8	18	37	—	6	—	—	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway													
Annandale and Eskdale	100	224	173	86	160	158	85	38	35	17	46	43	26
Nithsdale	129	78	49	18	27	6	70	80	66	74	81	33	10
Stewartry	74	51	49	42	44	41	23	34	40	10	45	33	2
Wigtown	32	77	34	120	20	86	—	40	20	26	—	5	—
Fife													
Dunfermline	110	129	—	83	89	26	58	60	178	132	11	—	—
Kirkcaldy	123	44	54	63	15	113	101	91	131	172	84	34	127
North East Fife	198	127	121	41	142	70	14	48	65	17	19	5	58
Grampian													
Aberdeen	430	518	372	134	47	117	178	45	93	136	109	71	62
Banff and Buchan	175	220	227	99	128	116	154	48	67	60	50	56	19
Gordon	35	—	4	85	199	108	89	44	171	9	183	80	72
Kincardine and Deeside	56	4	53	35	60	54	22	175	41	105	58	17	76
Moray	87	567	111	156	139	85	75	100	34	169	70	87	16
Highland													
Badenoch and Strathspey	24	49	20	54	38	16	16	—	13	—	12	11	6
Caithness	54	68	40	—	55	20	14	23	29	24	27	10	8
Inverness	38	124	68	25	115	90	10	136	32	59	86	90	93
Lochaber	57	102	18	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nairn	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	24	22	—	28	—	28
Ross and Cromarty	89	64	96	48	31	65	8	38	46	26	27	1	—
Skye and Lochalsh	11	46	9	13	—	10	14	46	8	25	50	8	14
Sutherland	13	27	13	22	27	22	15	10	33	34	22	68	8
Lothian													
East Lothian	46	18	30	45	92	25	91	65	14	66	59	10	25
Edinburgh	199	—	117	49	8	—	—	—	63	87	101	125	—
Midlothian	—	47	—	—	—	—	7	—	14	—	12	—	25
West Lothian	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	8	76	7	—	—
Strathclyde													
Argyll and Bute	110	126	68	60	33	76	17	—	12	71	31	15	25
Bearsden and Milngavie	36	67	27	56	12	—	16	—	35	6	—	6	—
Clydebank	—	63	73	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Clydesdale	53	32	49	18	20	18	—	30	—	24	—	32	18
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	35	54	3	—	16	8	—	—	6	—	—	—	—
Cumnock and Doon Valley	26	47	43	6	—	14	—	2	6	2	—	—	—
Cunninghame	102	68	90	45	85	44	54	34	—	55	—	31	24
Dumbarton	6	39	—	—	—	—	—	14	18	18	—	—	—
East Kilbride	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Areas	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Eastwood	—	25	3	14	—	—	37	40	14	31	42	—	31
Glasgow	615	385	558	161	63	—	140	58	—	—	—	—	—
Hamilton	55	166	42	78	122	46	44	39	8	53	—	—	—
Inverclyde	4	8	—	26	—	—	—	—	64	—	—	—	37
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	101	62	27	—	—	33	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kyle and Carrick	136	119	56	17	91	35	71	28	47	37	7	30	10
Monklands	61	37	53	—	11	67	—	—	—	—	56	—	—
Motherwell	167	173	104	50	—	—	—	36	—	—	—	—	—
Renfrew	65	122	113	179	34	135	19	10	64	27	—	—	—
Strathkelvin	254	—	40	—	6	13	6	24	7	—	—	—	—
Tayside													
Angus	58	40	—	12	34	34	41	84	40	78	47	32	30
Dundee	221	82	163	55	80	5	57	—	—	5	8	—	5
Perth and Kinross	150	273	149	71	75	105	144	21	—	—	—	—	—
Islands Councils													
Orkney Islands	34	25	26	18	43	16	6	6	12	41	13	42	8
Shetland Islands	55	121	81	31	43	25	33	20	20	30	20	25	63
Western Isles	115	54	93	90	22	32	46	20	33	14	10	2	21

Source: Quarterly returns from authorities.

Rents-to-Mortgages

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of *(a)* Scottish Homes and *(b)* new town Development corporation tenants who have (i) applied and (ii) purchased their home under the rents-to-mortgages scheme for each year of its introduction.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 June 1992]:* Information on applications by and sales to tenants of Scottish Homes and the new town development corporations since the introduction of the rent-to-mortgage scheme in October 1989 is shown in the table.

Year	Applications		Sales	
	Scottish Homes	New towns	Scottish Homes	New towns
1989-90	107	0	2	0
1990-91	200	60	133	5
1991-92	242	33	105	54

SOCIAL SECURITY

Citizens Charter

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security why officials of the Benefits Agency did not give their names to Mr. M C Vaughan-Chatfield when making inquiries on behalf of his wife's disability allowance; and what are the provisions of the citizens charter in this respect.

Mr. Scott: The citizens charter stated that public servants would normally be expected to wear name badges and to give their names on the telephone or in writing. The Benefit Agency's own customer charter also gave a commitment that, other than in exceptional circumstances, staff would give their names when dealing with customers. The arrangements for implementing this are currently being discussed at local level.

I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that staff do not recollect being asked for their names by Mr. Vaughan-Chatfield, although he was given them voluntarily on two occasions.

If my hon. Friend requires further information I understand Mr. Bichard would be happy to assist.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to improve the speed and efficiency of dealing with claims for, and appeals against decisions on, disability living allowances.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Access to Records

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what conclusions he has reached on the implications of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Graham Gaskin for people seeking access to personal records for which he has responsibility; and what action he intends to take.

Mr. Burt: The judgment in this case relates to the access to personal child care files held by social services authorities. However, officials in the Department are studying the judgment to establish whether it has any indirect impact on access to information held by the Department. I will write to the hon. Member when the extent of any implications has been established.

Plessey

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has had from pensioners of Plessey plc about their treatment by GEC.

Miss Widdecombe: We have received a number of representations from and on behalf of pensioners who were employed by Plessey plc prior to the companies' acquisition by GEC/Siemens in 1989. The representations concerned their occupational pension rights which are currently the subject of an agreement which is before the High Court for approval and the withdrawal of a free private health care plan which is a matter for the company as an employer, rather than for the pension scheme.

Income Support

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review income support rates to ensure that they are adequate to cover a basic standard of living.

Mr. Burt: Income support rates are reviewed each year and uprated by the Rossi index. From April this year, income support rates have been increased by 7 per cent., nearly 3 per cent. more than the RPI for the same period.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the cost to his Department of payments towards mortgage interest on the part of income support recipients in each of the years from 1988 to 1991; and what is his Department's estimate of the cost of such payments in the current year.

Mr. Burt: The table gives estimates from 1988 to 1990, the latest year for which information is available:

Amount included in assessments

Year	*£ million*
1988	286
1989	353
1990	554

Source: Income Support Statistical Inquiries 1988 to 1990.

Notes:
1. Figures have been rounded to the nearest million.
2. The figure for 1991 will be in the 1991 Annual Statistical Inquiry which will be published on 19 June. A copy will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of income support have been receiving amounts in respect of mortgage payments on their home in each of the years from 1988 to 1991; how many are currently receiving such assistance; and what is his Department's estimate of the number likely to be receiving such assistance in the current year.

Mr. Burt: The table gives estimates from 1988 to 1990, the latest year for which information is available.

Number of claimants receiving help with mortgage interest

Year	*Number*
1988	300,000
1989	281,000
1990	310,000

Source: Income Support Statistical Inquiries 1988-90.

Notes:
1. Figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.
2. The figure for 1991 will be in the 1991 Annual Statistical Inquiry which will be published on 19 June. A copy will be placed in the Library.

Benefits

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give reasons for the delay in resolving the case of Mrs. D. O. (reference YB17583A).

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Family Income

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate, using the latest family expenditure survey, average equalised weekly income *(a)* before housing costs, and *(b)* after housing costs.

Mr. Burt: The latest family expenditure survey data to be processed to yield figures in the form requested are those for 1988 and 1989. The results will be presented in the next edition of "Households Below Average Income" which we expect to be ready for publication in July. Copies of this publication will be available in the Library.

Repossessions

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has on the number of income support recipients who ceased to qualify for contributions towards the cost of their mortgage interest payments as a consequence of their home being repossessed in each of the years from 1988 to 1991; and how many are estimated to be in that position in the current year.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not held. Under the Social Security (Mortgage Interest Payments) Act 1992 help with mortgage interest will in the future be paid automatically to qualifying lenders. The Council of Mortgage Lenders has given an assurance that it will not seek possession when the mortgage interest due is covered by direct payment.

Maxwell Pension Funds

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what basis he reached the decision that £2·5 million would be sufficient to make good Maxwell pension losses until their funds' assets are unfrozen.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department keeps in close touch with the trustees of Maxwell pension funds to ensure that we have the most up to date information about the state of the schemes. The temporary emergency funding of up to £2·5 million will help trustees maintain payments to pensioners who would otherwise have a reduced pension or no pension over the next few months while frozen assets are being released and progress is made in restoring and obtaining other funds.

Publicity Spending

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, column *481*, if he will make a statement on the differences between the estimated and actual outturn for publicity spending in 1991-92.

Mr. Burt: The difference of £1·061 million resulted from a reduction in planned campaign activity during the year.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, column *489*, if he will make a statement on the variations in the estimated publicity spending of the Benefits Agency as announced in April and November 1991 and the outturn figure.

Mr. Burt: The publicity budget of the Benefits Agency is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of

the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member shortly and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the publicity spending of the Benefits Agency during 1990-91.

Mr. Burt: The publicity budget of the Benefits Agency is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member shortly and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

EMPLOYMENT

Defence Industries

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what policies she has formulated to retrain and redeploy the skills of those in the south west in general and Torridge and West Devon in particular who are affected adversely by the decline of defence-associated industries.

Mr. McLoughlin: There is a range of programmes and services available through the Employment Department, employment service, and training and enterprise councils (TECs) to help unemployed people find new jobs, retrain or set up their own businesses. These measures are available to former employees of all sectors, including defence, in the south west as elsewhere.

Devon and Cornwall TEC has established operation "Opus", a partnership between it, the employment service and others to give advice and help in defence redundancy situations.

The Employment Department has published an information pack, "Local Action for Employment Tackling Job Losses", which sets out the way TECs, the employment service and other local organisations can help individuals and communities affected by job losses.

Training

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many places on employment training and youth training schemes have been available in Walthamstow for each of the years 1990 and 1991; and how many are estimated as likely to be available in 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information regarding the number of training places available in Walthamstow is not collected.

Since 1 April 1991, training in Walthamstow has been the responsibility of London East training and enterprise council (LETEC). At 29 March 1992, there were an estimated 4,800 people in training on YT and an estimated 3,600 people in training on ET in the LETEC area.

EC Presidency

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what her Department's priorities are for the United Kingdom presidency of the Community.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The overall theme for the United Kingdom's presidency in employment and social affairs will be "A Community at Work".

The Department's key priorities for the presidency are as follows:

- to focus greater attention on tackling unemployment and creating lasting jobs in the Community;
- to promote even-handed and effective implementation and enforcement of existing EC legislation;
- to continue to remove barriers to the mobility of labour;
- to support the European year of health and safety by taking forward proposals promoting high standards of health and safety at work;
- to manage efficiently the business of the Social Affairs Council.

Training Places, Carlisle

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training places have been available in Carlisle in the years *(a)* 1988-89, *(b)* 1989-90, *(c)* 1990-91 and *(d)* 1991-92, respectively.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information regarding the number of training places available in Carlisle is not collected.

Since 30 April 1990, training in Carlisle has been the responsibility of Cumbria training and enterprise council (TEC). At 29 March 1992, there were an estimated 3,600 people in training on youth training and an estimated 1,300 people in training on employment training in the Cumbria TEC area.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons aged 16 and 17 years who are not in employment or education and are not on youth training scheme programmes there are in Carlisle at the present time.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the local careers service which covers the Carlisle area that there are currently 203 young people in the area who are registered with it as not in employment or education who are not in YT.

GCHQ

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recent discussions she has had with the International Labour Organisation about the ban on trade union organisations at GCHQ; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This matter has very recently been discussed in the international labour conference (ILO) where we confirmed that the dialogue with the trade unions on the issue remains open. At the same time we continued to make clear the overriding national security interests involved. The ILO took account of this position in reaching its conclusions which will be published shortly.

Annual Performance Agreement

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the Employment Service annual performance agreement for 1992-93 will be published.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have today placed copies of the Employment Service annual performance agreement for 1992-93 in the Library.

Equal Opportunities

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will name the members of the small high level working group which will advise her on issues relevant to women's opportunities in the workplace and beyond.

Mr. McLoughlin *[pursuant to his reply, 9 June 1992, columns 141-42]:* I regret that the list of members of the working group on women's issues given in my reply of 9 June 1992 was incorrect. The list gave the wrong details for Graham Millar and Peter Davis and ommitted Sheila Forbes. The correct information is as follows.

The first members are:

LADY HOWE
Chairman
Business in the Community's Women's Economic Development Team

Responsible for Opportunity 2000 (and former Deputy Chairman Equal Opportunities Commission)

JOANNA FOSTER
Chairman
Equal Opportunities Commission

SUE SLIPMAN
Director
National Council for One Parent Families

BARONESS DENTON
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Department of Trade and Industry and Government Co-chair, Women's National Commission

SUE RORSTAD
Chairman and Managing Director
Poppies UK Ltd.

PETER DAVIES
Chief Executive
Reed International plc

SHEILA FORBES
Group Personnel Director
Storehouse plc

KAY COLEMAN
Chief Executive
Harveys & Co. (clothing) Ltd.

GRAHAM MILLAR
Managing Director
Nestlé Rowntree

DR. SUSAN MCRAE
Senior Fellow
Policy Studies Institute

SIR BRYAN NICHOLSON
Chairman,
Post Office

Chairman,
National Council for Vocational Qualifications; Former Chairman, Manpower Services Commission

MARGARET SEYMOUR
Managing Director
Seymour Swimming Pool Engineers

NORTHERN IRELAND

Crime, Armagh

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on which dates *(a)* break-ins, *(b)* burglaries, *(c)* broken windows and *(d)* damage to premises were reported to the RUC during May, in the Scotch street, Thomas street, Market street, English street sector of the city centre of Armagh; for which of these dates the RUC has made arrests or charged persons; and if he will make a statement on policing in the city centre of Armagh.

Mr. Mates: The information available for the area specified is shown in the table:

Incidents reported to the police in May 1992

Date	*Number*
Attempted break-ins	
20 May	1
Total	1
Burglaries	
1 May	2
4 May	1
5 May	1
7 May	1
11 May	5
16 May	1
18 May	3
19 May	1
22 May	1
26 May	1
27 May	3
28 May	1
Total	21
Broken/cracked windows	
26 May	3
29 May	3
Total	6
Other damage to premises	
28 May	2
31 May	1
Total	3

I am informed by the Chief Constable that a number of arrests have been made in connection with acts of criminal damage in the area. One person has been charged with the three offences committed on 29 May and a person has been charged with the two criminal damage offences committed on 28 May. Police inquiries are continuing. Additionally, in an effort to improve the physical security of premises in the area and to resolve the current problems, the RUC is maintaining close liaison with the local community through the chamber of trade, the district council and other groups affected.

Community Affiliation

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list under the residuary method of determining an employee's community affiliation (DE code of practice) *(a)* those names to be regarded as Protestants, and those to be regarded as Roman Catholic, *(b)* those sporting and leisure pursuits to be so regarded, *(c)* those clubs or societies, membership of which would

indicate such distinction, *(d)* those qualifications, examinations and educational clauses which indicate a Protestant or Roman Catholic community affiliation and *(e)* which occupations would indicate Protestant community affiliation and which would indicate Roman Catholic community affiliation; and if he will publish this list.

Mr. Atkins: It is not possible to compile a list as requested. The residuary method of monitoring allows an employer to consider a range of possible indicators of community affiliation and then to treat the employee, or job applicant, as belonging to the community with which the totality of the information shows he has a connection, or has the stronger connection. This is a matter for the individual judgment of the employer in each particular case.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of whether the breakdown of Protestants and Roman Catholics in each district council area, based on all those aged 15 to 64 years, is an accurate reflection of the economically active work force.

Mr. Atkins: Estimates from aggregated 1990 and 1991 labour force survey (LFS) data indicate that in 17 out of the 26 district councils in Northern Ireland, the religious composition of the economically active population is consistent with the revised 1981 census of population figures for the religious composition of persons aged 15 to 64. In the remaining nine district council areas, the LFS estimates suggest that the Catholic proportion of the economically population is higher than that derived from 1981 census figures based on the population aged 15 to 64.

I understand that the Fair Employment Commission will be publishing, in the near future, LFS estimates on the religious composition of the economically active population in district council areas.

Data on the religious composition of the economically active population in each district council area will be contained in the Northern Ireland census 1991 summary report to be published in the autumn.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what monitoring has been done to examine any imbalance in the determining of community affiliation as a result of the numbers of Roman Catholics attending controlled or integrated schools.

Mr. Atkins: Research has shown that, particularly at primary school level, the number of Roman Catholics attending controlled schools does not have any significant effect on employers' monitoring statistics. Integrated schools are not classified for monitoring purposes.

Non-fossil Fuel Obligation

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to introduce a non-fossil fuel obligation for renewable energy following the privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity; what form it will take; and how large the first renewable energy order will be.

Mr. Atkins: The Department of Economic Development has commissioned a study into the potential for renewable energy in Northern Ireland and a decision when to introduce a non-fossil fuel obligation awaits the conclusion of that study. Before making a renewables order, the Department is obliged to consult Northern Ireland Electricity plc and the Director General of Electricity Supply and it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the likely form or scale of the first order in advance of that consultation taking place.

Strip Searches

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide statistics of the number of women's prisons in Northern Ireland that carry out strip search methods as a form of internal prison security; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates: There is only one prison in Northern Ireland holding female prisoners—Her Majesty's prison Maghaberry. Full searching takes place routinely on certain occasions when prisoners enter or leave the prison and at any other time it is deemed necessary for security reasons.

Sports Council

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will earmark cash in the Sports Council grant aid to enable the Sports Council to list the current stock of school playing fields land.

Mr. Hanley: Information on school playing fields is currently held by the Department of Education and is available to the Northern Ireland Sports Council.

Hospital Beds

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the hospitals in Northern Ireland which had consultant obstetric or general practitioner maternity beds in 1990-91, and give the number of beds of each type in each hospital.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* The information requested is as follows:

Average available beds in 1990-91

Hospital	*Obstetrics*	*GP maternity*
Ards	25·0	—
Belfast City	64·0	—
Downe	23·0	—
Lagan Valley	41·6	—
Mater	24·0	—
Royal Maternity	82·9	—
Ulster	44·1	—
EASTERN BOARD	304·6	—
Ballymena Cottage	10·0	16·0
Mid Ulster	26·0	—
Moyle	19·0	—
Robinson Memorial	—	14·0
Route	19·0	—
Waveney	25·0	—
NORTHERN BOARD	99·0	30·0
Craigavon Area	62·5	—
Daisy Hill	52·0	—
South Tyrone	31·9	—
SOUTHERN BOARD	146·3	—

Hospital	*Obstetrics*	*GP maternity*
Altnagelvin	71·0	—
Erne	33·0	—
Tyrone County	33·7	—
WESTERN BOARD	137·7	—
NORTHERN BOARD	687·6	30·0

HOME DEPARTMENT

Everton Football Supporters

16. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will make a decision on the case concerning the conviction of the Everton football supporters which had been referred to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I wrote to the hon. Member on 8 June. He will now be aware that we have concluded, after careful consideration, that there are insufficient grounds to justify intervention in the convictions by granting free pardons.

Prisons (Privatisation)

17. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate the benefits which the privatisation initiative will bring to the prison system.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Private sector involvement in the prison service introduces new and different methods of managing modern prisons to high standards of service set by the Government. I am quite sure that the introduction of new private sector management will stimulate improved standards and better value for money.

Crime Prevention

18. **Ms. Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to introduce the crime prevention measures recommended by the committee chaired by James Morgan.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he plans to implement the recommendations of the Morgan report.

Mr. Jack: The recommendations in the Morgan report ranged wider than had been expected under the working group's terms of reference and have therefore taken longer to consider. The report remains under active consideration within the Department and my right hon. and learned Friend hopes to be able to make an announcement in the near future.

May Inquiry

19. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the future of the May inquiry.

Mr. Jack: Sir John May's inquiry is continuing in accordance with the terms of reference given to him in October 1989.

Police, London

20. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next expects to meet the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to discuss sector policing in the capital.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend will be meeting the commissioner on 14 July to discuss the policing of the Notting Hill carnival.

He will also be visiting Metropolitan police service divisions to see sector policing in action.

Crime Statistics

21. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give figures for the change in levels of crime in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* South Wales and *(c)* Neath since 1979.

Mr. Jack: Between 1979 and 1991 recorded crime increased by 126 per cent. in south Wales and 108 per cent. in England and Wales as a whole. Statistics for Neath are not collected centrally. Statistics for other parts of the United Kingdom are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Northern Ireland.

Crime, Northumberland

22. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further discussions he intends to have with the Northumbria police authority about crime in Northumberland.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans so for further discussions at the moment.

Prisoners (Home Visits)

23. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on releasing prisoners temporarily for home visits.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The prison rules provide that sentenced prisoners may be temporarily released from prison, subject to conditions, for any special purpose or to enable them to engage in employment, to receive instruction or training or to assist them in the transition from prison life to freedom.

A prisoner who has been temporarily released may be recalled to prison at any time whether the conditions of his release have been broken or not.

Remand Prisoners

24. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures his Department is taking to deal with remand prisoners in police cells.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The prison service continues to work to increase the amount of available accommodation in order to reduce the number of prisoners in police cells. In addition to the delivery of a large number of new places under the prison building programme, measures taken so far have included the retention of establishments listed for closure and the conversion of under-occupied young offender accommodation to adult use.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps the Government propose to take to address anomalies in the geographical distribution of remands to prison department custody.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The provision of sufficient places in prison service establishments, which serve the courts by holding inmates remanded in custody or awaiting trial, is a matter which is kept under constant review. Where the current level of provision fails to meet demand or is likely to fail to meet future demand, the prison service seeks to deal with the problem either by changing the role of existing accommodation or through the prison building programme.

Police Numbers

25. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for increasing police numbers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The establishments of individual forces were increased by some 800 posts with effect from 1 April 1992. A further 78 police posts have so far been allocated, in respect of policing at ports, airports and the regional crime squads. The vast majority of new posts have been allocated to forces with the greatest relative need for more officers.

Police, West Yorkshire

26. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will meet the chief constable of West Yorkshire to discuss staffing levels.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have no present plans to meet the chief constable of the West Yorkshire police. I look to the force and the police authority to ensure that West Yorkshire has its full complement of officers.

Drug Offences

27. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the total levels of funds sequestrated from convicted drug pushers in the last five years.

Mr. Jack: The latest figures, which are in respect of confiscation orders made between 1987 and 1990, are given in table 7.25 of Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1990, a copy of which is in the Library. These show that over £27 million was ordered to be confiscated in those years. The current estimate by the national criminal intelligence service of the cumulative total of confiscation orders made since the Drug Trafficking Offences Act came into force in January 1987, up to the end of 1991, is around £35 million.

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have taken place in 1991 in connection with *(a)* unlawful possession, *(b)* possession with intent to supply unlawfully, *(c)* unlawful supply and *(d)* unlawful import of the drug Ecstasy (MDMA).

Mr. Jack: Figures for 1991 are not yet available. The figures for 1990 were as follows:

Ecstasy (MDMA)

United Kingdom 1990	*Number of prosecutions*
Unlawful possession	269
Possession with intent to supply unlawfully	87
Unlawful supply	40
Unlawful import	14

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will increase the penalties for the selling of the drug Ecstasy (MDMA).

Mr. Jack: MDMA is categorised as a class A drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and the maximum penalty for supplying or offering to supply is life imprisonment. Consequently, I have no plans to change this penalty.

Citizenship

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when a decision is to be taken on the request made by the hon. Member for Bradford, West on 28 April for an application by Mrs. Y. Afzal of Bradford for British citizenship, reference 420258, to be expedited on compassionate grounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: As I have explained in my reply to the hon. Member's letter, we have agreed to give Mrs. Afzal's application priority consideration. Our inquiries are underway and a decision should be possible within the next few weeks.

Criminal Injuries (Compensation)

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases are currently under consideration by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, broken down by the year of application.

Mr. Jack: The number of applications under consideration at the end of May 1992 was 57,800. A further 11,000 were awaiting the applicant's response to an award offer, and 11,800 were awaiting decision on appeal.

The board does not record the age of applications in the form requested. However, the percentage of cases resolved within certain periods of time is shown in the board's annual reports, copies of which are held in the Library.

Fox Hunting

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his policy on fox hunting.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government believe that participation in field sports, including fox hunting, is a matter for the conscience and decision of the individual.

Prisoners (Medical Treatment)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison inmates have been treated in national health service hospitals in each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table shows the number of referrals to national health service hospitals for

out-patient treatment and for in-patient observation or treatment in each of the three financial years up to 1990-91. Corresponding information for 1991-92 is not yet available. Information about the number of prisoners treated is not held centrally.

Referrals	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Out-patient	18,494	18,740	18,402
In-patient	1,964	1,988	1,887

Age of Consent

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to introduce an equal age of consent in the United Kingdom, regardless of sexual orientation.

Mr. Jack: We have no such proposals at present.

Police Shootings

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of civilians shot dead by police marksmen in each police authority in England and Wales since 1982, indicating whether the deceased were in possession of firearms, replica firearms or were unarmed, and give the verdicts recorded by coroners' inquests in such deaths.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is set out in the table.

Year and police authority	*Deceased in possession of firearms*	*Deceased in possession of replica*	*Deceased unarmed*	*Inquest verdict*
1985				
West Midlands	—	—	Yes	[1]—
1987				
Metropolitan	Yes	—	—	Open
Metropolitan	Yes	—	—	Lawful killing
Metropolitan	Yes	—	—	Lawful killing
Metropolitan	Yes	—	—	Lawful killing
Avon and Somerset	Yes	—	—	Lawful killing
Metropolitan	Yes	—	—	Lawful killing
1989				
Metropolitan	Yes	—	—	Lawful killing
Metropolitan	Yes	—	—	Lawful killing
1990				
Metropolitan	Yes	—	—	Lawful killing
Cheshire	Yes	—	—	Lawful killing
1991				
Northumbria	—	Yes	—	Lawful killing
West Mercia	[2]Yes	—	—	Lawful killing
1992				
West Yorkshire	—	Yes	—	Inquest not yet completed

[1] An officer of the West Midlands police was acquitted of the manslaughter of the deceased. The coroner subsequently decided to exercise his discretion under section 20 of the Coroners Amendment Act 1926 not to proceed with an inquest.
[2] The deceased was in possession of an air pistol which was incapable of being discharged.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much was spent on events and publicity surrounding the launch of the Fire Service college as an agency; and whether the cost was borne by the parent department or the new agency.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The cost of activities to mark the launch of the Fire Services college as the first Next Steps agency to achieve trading fund status at the outset was about £9,000 and was met by the Home Office.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the maximum salary payable, including performance related element, and the length of time of the contract of the chief executive of the Fire Service college.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The final detail of the total remuneration for the chief executive, whose contract runs initially until October 1993, is under negotiation but the maximum is to be set at a figure substantially less than the maximum (£71,800) for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Service.

Personal Records

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what conclusions he has reached on the implications of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Graham Gaskin for people seeking access to personal records for which he has responsibility; and what action he intends to take.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The consultative document issued by the Department of Health in February, in the light of this case, recorded the Government's view that the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights applied only to social services records. Consideration is currently being given to the question of whether it has any implications for personal records for which my Department has responsibility.

Sexual Offences

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many men were sent to prison in each of the last five years for convictions of gross indecency involving consenting sex with men aged over 16 years and

under 21 years; how many such prosecutions have taken place in each of the last five years; and how many convicted prisoners there are at present.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table gives information on the offences of indecency between males by a man of the age of 21 or over with another male person under the age of 21 —Sexual Offences Act 1956, section 13 as amended by the Sexual Offences Act 1967, section 3(2). These convictions did not necessarily involve fully consensual behaviour.

Information on the numbers currently serving a custodial sentence in a prison service establishment in England and Wales for this offence is not presently available centrally.

Number of males prosecuted, convicted and sentenced to immediate custody for the offence of indecency between males by a man of the age of 21 or over with another male person under the age of 21
England and Wales

Number

Year	*Prosecutions*	*Convictions*	*Sentences of immediate custody*
1986	245	225	23
1987	270	264	26
1988	292	250	13
1989	404	361	21
1990	445	353	8

Prison Population

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those prisons where the population on 4 June was less than the certified normal accommodation for reasons connected to industrial action or refusal to co-operate by the staff.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On Thursday 4 June there were no prison service establishments in England and Wales where industrial action was causing the population to fall below the certified normal accommodation.

Prison Budgets

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends that prison governors will be allowed to have full, or substantial, control over their budgets.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are currently considering how the present financial delegations to governors might be extended. Our aim is to introduce any changes on or as soon as possible after the prison service becomes an agency in April 1993.

Dartmoor Prison

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the current programme for refurbishment at HM prison Dartmoor is likely to be completed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The building programme now in progress at HM prison Dartmoor (the refurbishment of A, B and D wings, and the construction of a new kitchen, victualling store, administration and visits complex) is scheduled for completion in May 1994.

Work is due to start later this year on an all weather sports pitch and on a programme to install integral sanitation in F and G wings and the hospital. The remaining wings are due to be refurbished in 1994-95.

Juveniles

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many 15-year-olds were sentenced to detention in a young offenders institution in 1990; and for what offences they were sentenced.

Mr. Jack: Information for 1990 is given in the table:

Persons aged 15 years sentenced to detention in a young offender institution by sex and offence
England and Wales – 1990

Offence	*Male*	*Female*
Indictable offences		
Causing death by reckless driving	1	—
Wounding or other act endangering life	2	—
Other wounding etc.	31	—
Rape	5	—
Indecent assault on a female	4	—
Burglary in a dwelling	129	1
Burlary in a building other than a dwelling	70	—
Robbery	34	3
Theft from the person of another	2	—
Theft of a pedal cycle	1	—
Theft from vehicle	11	—
Theft from shops	7	—
Theft or unauthorised taking of motor vehicle	5	—
Other theft or unauthorised taking	24	1
Handling stolen goods	9	—
Arson	16	1
Other criminal damage	8	—
Drug offences	3	—
Going equipped for stealing etc.	4	—
Blackmail	5	1
Unlawful assembly	5	—
Other offence against State or public order	3	—
Absconding from lawful custody	1	—
Failing to surrender to bail	1	—
Reckless driving	14	—
Summary offences		
Assault on a constable	4	—
Assault, common etc	1	—
Offences against public order	2	—
Interference with motor vehicle	5	—
Unauthorised taking of a conveyance	57	—
Criminal or malicious damage	2	—
Vagrancy offences	1	—
Other summary non-motoring offences	1	—
Driving while unfit through drink or drugs	1	—
Other summary motoring offences	8	—
Total all offences	477	7

Bridewell Prison

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the condition and use of holding cells in Bridewell prison, Liverpool; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In addition to the hon. Member, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has also

received letters from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) the rector of Liverpool and the high sheriff of Merseyside about the conditions in Liverpool Bridewell.

The prison service has received a request from the Merseyside police for the funding of improvements to the holding cells and adjacent areas in Liverpool Bridewell. There are arrangements for the prison service in certain circumstances to meet the cost of essential improvements to accommodation being used by the police to hold prisoners who should be in prison service establishments. The request is being considered and a response will be made as soon as possible.

Police Expenditure

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by how much his Department has increased spending on the police in the last year; and what estimate he has made of the costs incurred directly by the public sector in the provision of policing outside the budgetary responsibility of his Department.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Home Office expenditure on the police increased from £2,435 million in 1990-91 to £2,830 million in 1991-92. Information on the costs of police forces outside Home Office jurisdiction is not held centrally.

Police Radio Transmissions

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to overcome the interception of police radio transmissions by unauthorised persons.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My Department, working closely with the Association of Chief Police Officers, is establishing standing arrangements for the supply of speech privacy devices which will render police radio transmissions unintelligible to the unauthorised listener. It is for individual chief constables to implement this solution.

Murder Sentences

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the length of sentences currently being served by women convicted of murdering their husbands.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: From time to time I receive representations about individual cases and about the mandatory life sentence for murder.

Belmarsh Prison

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the board of visitors at Belmarsh prison, or from others, concerning the catering arrangements and the quality of food at Belmarsh; and what assessment he has made of the performance of the private caterers at Belmarsh.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have received no representations about the catering arrangements and the quality of food at Belmarsh prison from the board of visitors. Complaints from prisoners about the food are common to all prisons, Belmarsh included. Action is always taken locally to investigate them and resolve any problems which are discovered.

The food on offer in Belmarsh is sampled twice daily by the governor. Catering services supplied by contract in Belmarsh are under constant scrutiny. If they are considered by the governor or by the prison service catering specialists not to be complying with their contract, action will be taken.

Political Asylum

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many Somali applicants for political asylum were granted full refugee status; and how many were granted exceptional leave to remain in *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1990, *(c)* 1991 and *(d)* the current year;

(2) how many applications for political asylum were received from Somali nationals in *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1990, *(c)* 1991 and *(d)* the current year; and how many remain outstanding from each year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information is given in the table.

Applications[1,2] received for asylum in the United Kingdom by Somali nationals, excluding dependants, and decisions[1,2], 1989-1992

	Applications received	*Decisions[3]*						
		Granted asylum	*Granted exceptional leave*	*Refusals*			*Total decisions*	*Total applications outstanding at end of period[6]*
				Refused asylum and exceptional leave[4]	*Refused under para 101 of immigration rules[5]*	*Total refused*		
1989	1,850	815	260	10	—	10	1,085	1,140
1990	1,920	280	75	25	—	25	380	2,680
1991	1,995	40	175	35	—	35	250	4,430
1992 (January to May)	510	10	745	15	100	120	875	4,060

[1] Provisional and estimated figures, rounded to the nearest 5.
[2] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the year concerned.
[3] 1991 decision figures may understate because of delays in recording.
[4] Includes refusals on the grounds that the applicant had arrived from a safe third country and, up to 30 November 1991, refusals under paragraph 101 of the immigration rules for failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period.

[5] From 1 December 1991 only: see footnote [4].
[6] Including outstanding applications from earlier years. These figures are maxima which are likely to overstate because of earlier underrecording of decisions.

Crime, West Yorkshire

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the increase in crime in West Yorkshire.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The increase in crime figures for West Yorkshire in the last year was attributable mainly to vehicle related theft and burglaries, often involving juveniles. It is one of the force's benefiting from the urban crime fund and entitled to additional Government funding of up to £3·66 million for 1992-93. This will enable the force to undertake special innovative projects to help tackle its particular problem areas of crime.

Residence Permits

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion, over the last five years, of in-country applications were made within a short period of arrival in the United Kingdom within one week, two weeks and one month.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* Comprehensive reliable information is not available. The information available suggests that in 1990 and 1991 around a third of in-country asylum applicants who were admitted to the United Kingdom as visitors or students applied within a month of their arrival.

ENVIRONMENT

Oil Spillages (Thames)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what action he proposes to take to reduce the incidence of oil spillages into the Thames;

(2) how many oil spillages into the Thames have occurred in the past year and from what source.

Mr. Maclean: The National Rivers Authority, which we established in 1989, has wide powers to prosecute polluters and to recover its clean up costs, and a vigorous policy of prosecuting those responsible for serious incidents; the courts can and do impose significant fines in respect of major cases, particularly since the Government's increase (to £20,000) in the maximum fine which magistrates can impose. I understand from the National Rivers Authority that in 1991, 23 oil pollution incidents were reported on the tidal Thames, nine of which were classified as major.

Conservation

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to develop a United Kingdom conservation database in a form which could be inter-linked with the World Conservation Monitoring Centre.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced on 12 June the Darwin initiative on the survival of the species. This will draw together and build on United Kingdom strengths in the biodiversity field including the very good work carried out by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre. We are currently considering how this initiative will be developed.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining his Department's policy on the conservation of global commons and the equitable sharing of derived benefits.

Mr. Maclean: Global commons are those areas such as the high seas and the atmosphere over which no one country has national sovereignty. I am not aware of any benefits derived from these areas which would need to be subject to equitable sharing.

Biological Diversity

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to encourage the completion, adoption and implementation of a convention on the conservation of biological diversity.

Mr. Maclean: The negotiations on the convention of biological diversity were completed and adopted on 22 May in Nairobi. On 12 June my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister signed the convention on behalf of the United Kingdom. The convention will come into force only after 30 countries have ratified it. We hope that that will be soon.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to undertake research on the effects of habitat fragmentation on biological diversity.

Mr. Maclean: My Department is currently funding two projects relevant to our understanding of the effects of habitat fragmentation on biological diversity.

Countryside Survey 1990 is a detailed survey of Great Britain, jointly funded by NERC—the National Environment Research Council. A more detailed assessment of key habitats has also been commissioned with the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology. In addition, the joint nature conservation committee will shortly put out to tender a project on the effect of habitat fragmentation on vertebrate populations.

London Docklands

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total spending that the London Docklands development corporation is committing to social projects in 1992-93; and if he will break this figure down into amounts to be spent on *(a)* training, *(b)* social housing, *(c)* Tower Hamlets accord, *(d)* Newham memorandum of agreement, *(e)* community grants and *(f)* health projects; and if he will make a statement on the future of the social programme and the future of the London Docklands development corporation.

Mr. Redwood: The London Docklands Development Corporation has allocated £12·4 million for social schemes to be undertaken in 1992-93, broken down as follows:

	£ million
(i) Training and education	6·0
(ii) Social housing	4·1
(iii) Community grants	1·7
(iv) Health projects	0·6

The corporation has earmarked £8·5 million for the Tower Hamlets accord and £3·7 million for the Newham

memorandum in this financial year. Some social schemes listed in (i)-(iv), for example in Southwark or benefiting Docklands as a whole, fall outside the scope of either agreement.

The corporation will continue to provide funding for projects which improve the social infrastructure of Docklands.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the total area of land in the London Docklands urban development area covered by planning consents or permission for enterprise zone development that have been granted to the developers Olympia and York.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 12 June 1992]:* The London Docklands development corporation has granted enterprise zone consent or planning permission to Olympia and York for the development of 34·6 hectares in the urban development area.

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking following the recommendations on aircraft noise prepared by the noise review working party 1990.

Mr. Maclean: The Government's response to the eight recommendations on aircraft noise in the noise review working party's report 1990 were published as part of the Department of Transport's Consultation Paper, "Control of Aircraft Noise", published in August 1991. That paper accepted some of the recommendations outright, rejected two, and invited comments on others. Publication of the consultation paper also fulfilled an undertaking given in the Government's White Paper "Our Common Inheritance".

In response to one of the recommendations (No. 31) my Department issued for consultation last December a draft planning policy guidance note "Planning and Noise" which incorporates the concept of different levels of noise exposure and relates this to noise sensitive development near airfields.

The Government are carefully considering the responses to the "Control of Aircraft Noise" consultation paper and a Government response will be announced in due course.

Air Pollution

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by his Department in fulfilling the targets for emission levels set by the United Nations Commission for Europe convention on long-range transboundary air pollution.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom is committed to two targets under protocols to the convention; to return our annual emissions of nitrogen oxides to 1987 levels by 1994, and to reduce our annual emissions of volatile organic compounds by 30 per cent. from 1988 levels by 1999. We remain on course to meet both obligations.

Environmental Information

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals to the European Environment Council to bring forward the required reporting dates for environmental information provided for under article 7 of Council directive 91/692/EEC, as published in the *Official Journal*, No. L 377, pages 48-55, 31 December 1991, following decisions taken on the reporting of environmental information at the United Nations conference on environment and development.

Mr. Maclean: The reporting dates specified in article 7 of the directive were agreed as recently as December 1991 following thorough consultation and represent the shortest practicable timetable for implementation. We do not therefore intend to propose that they should be brought forward.

We fully support the conclusions of UNCED on regular reporting of progress towards sustainable development but this has no direct bearing on the timetable for implementation of the EC directive. The United Kingdom is well placed to follow up UNCED through its established system of annual white paper reports.

Credit Approvals

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities have received supplementary credit approvals for the present financial year; and if he will give details.

Mr. Redwood: No central record of credit approvals issued by Government Departments is maintained. To compile a list of supplementary credit approvals issued for the present financial year would involve disproportionate cost.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all those functions and areas in his Department and associated agencies that have been identified for market testing in the wake of the White Paper "Competing for Quality".

Mr. Redwood: Following the publication of the White Paper "Competing for Quality" a detailed programme of possible opportunities for market testing has been drawn up. A statement will be made shortly by the Office of Public Service and Science.

Opencast Mining

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those mineral authorities which, in the last five years, have requested the withdrawal of permitted development rights vested in British Coal in respect of opencast prospecting; if he will, in each case, give the name of the site involved, within the terms of article 5 of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988; what was his decision in respect of each of those sites; and if he will give details of the cost of compensation to British Coal and other interested persons.

Mr. Baldry: In the last five years no mineral authorities have requested the withdrawal of permitted development rights vested in British Coal in respect of opencast prospecting.

Commissioner for Local Administration

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had regarding the remit of the Commissioner for Local Administration in England; and whether he has any proposals to change that remit.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of representations on this subject, including representations from the commission itself, and he is considering whether it would be appropriate to make a change in the scope of the remit.

Acid Deposition

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made by his Department in funding research work to define the tolerance of ecosystems to acid deposition and the development of new standards and controls to ensure that those thresholds are not exceeded.

Mr. Maclean: The tolerances of ecosystems in soils and freshwaters to acid deposition, or their critical loads, have been quantified and mapped for Scotland, Wales and much of England. Maps have also been prepared comparing present and predicted deposition loads with the critical loads. These show that substantial progress will have been made by 2005 in reducing areas subject to damage. Copies of all these maps are in the Library of the House.

All this work has been funded through the Department's air quality research programme, which has also supported projects on abatement strategies and techniques.

Green Consumer Label

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by his Department towards developing a green consumer label for products.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom has strongly supported the establishment of a European eco-labelling scheme. Now that the European Community regulation setting up the scheme has been adopted we are taking a leading role in progressing arrangements for a launch later this year.

Power Companies (Appeals)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he expects to determine the appeals by National Power and PowerGen under section 22(5) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990; if he will undertake to publicise the result of the appeal; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make it his policy to reject National Power and PowerGen's appeals to exclude information from the public registers on the grounds of commercial confidentiality under section 22(5) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Decisions on these appeals will be made as soon as possible, and announced publicly. The Secretary of State does not comment on appeals awaiting determination.

Local Government Finance

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the metropolitan and London borough councils which have obtained a higher standard spending assessment settlement per person in the current year than St. Helens; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The table shows those London borough and metropolitan district councils which have a higher 1992-93 standard spending assessment per adult than St. Helens.

Standard spending assessments are calculated using the same principles applied to all authorities. They take account of each authority's own demographic, geographic and social characteristics.

Local authority	*SSA per adult (£ 000s)*
Hackney	2,117
Tower Hamlets	2,048
Islington	1,722
Newham	1,686
Westminster	1,675
Lambeth	1,667
Southwark	1,533
Brent	1,508
Manchester	1,490
Camden	1,450
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,439
Lewisham	1,402
Haringey	1,390
Wandsworth	1,388
Waltham Forest	1,305
Kensington and Chelsea	1,298
Greenwich	1,298
Knowsley	1,287
Liverpool	1,286
Birmingham	1,284
Ealing	1,274
Bradford	1,230
Wolverhampton	1,180
Hounslow	1,137
Oldham	1,095
Salford	1,090
Sandwell	1,081
Coventry	1,080
Enfield	1,075
Barking and Dagenham	1,072
Rochdale	1,069
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,053
Croydon	1,045
South Tyneside	1,029
Barnet	1,025
Bolton	1,023
Redbridge	1,018
Sunderland	1,017
St. Helens	1,011

Packaging

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to encourage manufacturers to desist from wasting resources by over-packaging.

Mr. Maclean: My colleagues at the Department have met representatives of the packaging industry three times this year to discuss ways in which they can eliminate unnecessary packaging and reduce the amount of packaging which is thrown away. We have indicated that, if the industry does not produce substantive proposals, we are prepared to take action.

As an initial response to the need to minimise packaging waste, the British Retail Consortium recently issued guidance to its members and their suppliers on retail packaging. Following discussions with the Government, I understand that the packaging industry will be announcing an initiative to deal with complaints about over-packaging next week. I will write to the hon. Member when full details are available.

Environmental Impact Assessments

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of his formal response to the letter from Mr. Carlo Ripa di Meana in respect of the implementation of the EC directive on environmental impact assessments.

Mr. Maclean: The details of article 169 correspondence are, by convention, treated in confidence between the Commission and member states.

Council Tax

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the position of beach chalets and static caravans under the council tax.

Mr. Robin Squire: Under the council tax, the treatment of this property will be broadly the same as it is under the community charge.

A beach chalet or hut which is living accommodation will be banded for council tax on the same basis as other domestic property unless it is available for letting as holiday accommodation for more than 140 days a year, when it will be subject to non-domestic rates. If a chalet is not living accommodation, it will be liable for non-domestic rates.

A caravan or mobile home which is used as a residence will be banded for council tax in the same way as other residences. The pitch for any other caravan will be liable for non-domestic rates, usually paid by the site operator.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average length of time for appeals to be heard against uniform business rates in Carlisle.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information is not available centrally on the time taken to deal with non-domestic rating appeals.

Appeals in Carlisle are dealt with by the Cumbria valuation tribunal. Following revaluation on 1 April 1990, the tribunal initially received about 7,800 appeals (including transitional cases) in respect of the whole of Cumbria. Most of these were received towards the end of that financial year and by the end of March 1992 some 4,200 had been received.

Caravans

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the new building regulations and SI 2768 apply to caravans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: No. The requirements of the Building Regulations (SI 1991 No. 2768) 1991 apply only to building work, and caravans do not fall within the definition of building contained within these regulations.

Housing Expenditure, Ryedale

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the sum of money paid to the Ryedale district council when its stock of council houses was transferred to the housing association concerned, the consequent reduction in debt and the amount which was available for capital projects.

Mr. Baldry: Ryedale district council transferred its housing stock to Ryedale Housing Association in February 1991 for the sume of £28·3 million. Following transfer, the council was able to repay all its external loan debt of £18 million, leaving some £10 million available for capital projects.

Merseyside Task Force

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the new director of Merseyside task force will be appointed and take up his duties.

Mr. Howard: As soon as possible.

Greenhouse Gases

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) of 15 May, *Official Report*, column *237*, what consultation he has had with the Commissioner for the Environment of the European Commission concerning the United Kingdom contribution to international efforts to reduce all greenhouse gases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The limitation of greenhouse gas emissions is discussed regularly at meetings involving European Community member states and the Commission, most recently at the Environmental Council of 26 May. At that meeting, the Council expressed its support for the United Nations framework convention on climate change, which will commit developed country parties to adopt policies and measures aimed at returning emissions of greenhouse gases not controlled by the Montreal protocol to their 1990 levels by 2000.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) of 15 May, *Official Report*, column *237*, what progress he has to report on a United Kingdom strategy to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases other than carbon dioxide.

Mr. Maclean: The 1990 White Paper on the Environment, "This Common Inheritance", and the first year report on the White Paper give details of measures already being taken to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases other than carbon dioxide. The United Nations framework convention on climate change will commit developed country parties to submit detailed information on their policies and measures to limit emissions of all greenhouse gases not controlled by the Montreal protocol.

Energy Savings Trust

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) of 15 May, *Official Report*, column *237*, what progress he has made on

the establishment of an energy savings trust; if he will specify what its *(a)* departmental, *(b)* regulatory agency and *(c)* regulated public utility funding is; what its estimated start of operations date is; and what its objectives and purposes are.

Mr. Maclean: The Energy Saving Trust is being established to develop and propose programmes designed to promote the efficient use of energy and so protect the environment. My officials in the Energy Efficiency Office are working with British Gas and the regional electricity companies (RECS) to establish the Energy Saving Trust as soon as is practicable. It is hoped that the first pilot scheme to be funded by British Gas will begin within the next few months.

Green Issues

Mr. Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the Ministers responsible for green issues in each Government department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The environment is not just the concern of one Government Department, and the nomination of Green Ministers in each Department is an important part of our strategy to ensure that environmental considerations are taken into account in all policy areas. Green Ministers follow up the commitments relevant to their Departments in the Government's 1990 White Paper on the Environment. They ensure the integration of environmental concerns with the policy and work of their own Departments. And they broadcast the environmental message in their own field.

The "Green" Ministers are:

Department	*Minister*
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	The right hon. John Gummer MP
Defence	The Viscount Cranborne
Education	Eric Forth Esq. MP
Employment	The Viscount Ullswater
Environment	The right hon. Michael Howard QC MP
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	The hon. Mark Lennox-Boyd MP
Health	Baroness Cumberledge CBE
Home Office	Peter Lloyd Esq. MP
Law Officers'	Sir Derek Spencer QC MP
Lord Chancellor's	John M. Taylor Esq. MP
National Heritage	Robert Key Esq. MP
Northern Ireland Office	Robert Atkins Esq. MP
Overseas Development	Baroness Chalker
Public Service and Science	Robert Jackson Esq. MP
Scottish Office	Sir Hector Monro MP
Social Security	The Lord Henley
Trade and Industry	The right hon. Michael Heseltine MP
Transport	The right hon. John MacGregor OBE MP
Treasury	The right hon. Sir John Cope MP
Welsh Office	The right hon. David Hunt MBE MP

Relocation

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will identify the number of civil servants by grade who will be moving from Marsham street to docklands.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 17 June 1992]:* No decisions have yet been taken about the number of civil servants by grade which will be moved to Docklands. All London posts in my Department are currently being reviewed to assess their suitability for relocation.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the 2,000 civil servants due to move from Marsham street to Docklands have personal contact with Ministers on average once a month or more.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 17 June 1992]:* Detailed records of contact are not kept. A review of suitability of posts for relocation to Docklands will take into account the need for personal contact with Ministers.

Biodiversity

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the steps being taken to follow up the decisions taken at Rio de Janeiro on biodiversity.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 17 June 1992]:* My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister informed the House on 15 June that he had announced at Rio a Darwin initiative for the survival of species. This will draw on the great strengths which we have in our many centres of excellence in biodiversity to provide practical help to enable countries to meet their commitments under the biodiversity convention.

My right hon. Friend has also written to EC and G7 colleagues proposing an eight point plan for follow up including the drawing up of plans for action on global diversity.

World Environment

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance was provided by Her Majesty's Government to the United Nations Environment Programme for the UNEP report on the state of the world environment, published on 7 May; and what evaluation he has made of the report.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 16 June 1992]:* The United Kingdom contribution to UNEP for financial year 1992-93 is £4·5 million. This helps to fund all UNEP activities including the production of reports. The report on the state of the world environment is a sound and useful document.

Water Disconnections

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what plans he has to discuss with the chairman of the North West Water Authority the rise in disconnections of water services between 1990-91 and 1991-92 with a view to providing emergency services to these households;

(2) when he intends to make a statement on his plans to discuss with the chairman of the North West Water authority the rise in disconnections of water services between 1990-1991 and 1991-1992, with a view to providing emergency services to those households.

Mr. Maclean: The Director General of Water Services has the specific function of protecting the interests of customers, including those who are having difficulty in meeting their bills, and is concerned at the sharp increase in disconnections nationally. I welcome the action he has

taken in issuing revised guidelines to companies and his proposals for further research into the characteristics of those who have been disconnected. It is right that bills should be paid, but also that companies should provide every assistance to customers who are having difficulty in meeting their bills. The legislation now provides that, in virtually all instances, customers will not be disconnected unless they have failed to comply with the terms of a court order for repayment of outstanding arrears. Where a supply of water to a house is disconnected, and is not re-connected within 24 hours, the company must notify the local authority in whose area the house is situated. The terms of an appointee's licence provide that no customer should be disconnected if he or she is seeking assistance from DSS and has notified the company to that effect.

DEFENCE

Detention Sentences

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women are serving a detention sentence in military establishments in England and Wales as of 8 June.

Mr. Aitken: As at 8 June there were 232 males and seven females serving sentences at military detention centres in England. There are no detention centres in Wales. In the Army and RAF sentences of less than 28 days are served at local establishments. The numbers detained at local establishments are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Military Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the military prisons in England and Wales.

Mr. Aitken: The Armed Forces no longer have any military prisons. The last one, Shepton Mallet, closed in 1968. All service personnel sentenced to imprisonment by courts martial serve their sentence in civil prisons.

Markle and Forss Stations

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has reached a decision on the future use of land at the Markle and Forss communications stations, Caithness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: No final decisions have yet been taken.

Civilian Establishment, Catterick

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current civilian establishment at Catterick garrison and RAF Catterick; and what is the projected establishment for each successive year for which figures are available.

Mr. Aitken: The current civilian establishments at Catterick garrison and RAF Catterick are 1,221 and 85 respectively. In common with many other Defence establishments in the United Kingdom, those at Catterick are currently under review. Until this review is completed, it is not possible to give forecasts of likely future civilians numbers.

Cambodia

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 22 May, *Official Report*, column *291*, what means of self-protection will be available to Royal Navy and Royal Marine personnel operating on Cambodian vessels as part of the naval group within the UN transitional authority in Cambodia.

Mr. Aitken: The Royal Naval and Royal Marine personnel operating on Cambodian vessels as part of the United Kingdom's contribution to UNTAC are acting as United Nations military observers and, in accordance with the usual practice, will not be armed. The security of all United Kingdom participants in UNTAC is the responsibility of the United Nations and the Cambodian factions. We do however, keep the security position in Cambodia and the possible threat to the safety of United Kingdom personnel under continuous review.

Plymouth Urban Development Corporation

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much development land at Plymouth his Department has handed over to the proposed urban development corporation; what funds he has made available from the defence budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: None. The amount of surplus MOD land in Plymouth to be handed over to the proposed urban development corporation and the mechanics of transfer of land and funds remain to be worked out in detail.

Maersk Ascension

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) of 20 May, *Official Report*, column *185*, if he will set out the total amount paid to date for charter of Maersk Ascension since inception of the charter arrangements; what arrangements existed for bulk fuel storage prior to the charter for Maersk Ascension; what assessment his Department has made of the costs of construction of appropriate onshore facilities and of subsequent running costs; and for what purposes bulk fuel storage at Ascension island is required.

Mr. Aitken: Since inception of the charter arrangements for the Maersk Ascension in July 1983, the Department has paid just over £23·5 million in charter costs to date. Before the Falklands campaign there was no requirement for bulk fuel storage for the RAF at Ascension island. During and after the conflict temporary storage arrangements were made involving the use of pillow tanks. In 1988 a limited study showed the costs of construction of an appropriate on-shore facility to be around £11 million. No estimate for running costs was made. A detailed investment appraisal is currently being undertaken. The requirement for bulk fuel storage at Ascension island is to support routine flying activities and for refuelling of aircraft flying to the Falkland islands.

Royal Navy Helicopter Team

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why he proposes to disband the Royal Navy helicopter display team.

Mr. Aitken: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will write to the hon. Member.

Menwith Hill Station

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for how long notices informing the public of their right to inspect plans of a proposed planning application for the extension of the sewage works at Menwith Hill station were displayed; what was the period of display specified by the defence land agent; and what complaints he has received about the period the notices were displayed.

Mr. Aitken: The notices concerning the proposed development of sewage works at Menwith Hill station were displayed on two separate occasions for a total of 14 days. The original period specified by the Defence land agent was seven days in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act Section 65(3). One complaint has been received regarding the period the notice was displayed.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will withdraw a planning application for the extension of the sewage works at Menwith Hill station.

Mr. Aitken: No.

W. S. Atkins Ltd.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the nature and total value of contracts awarded to W. S. Atkins Ltd. and associated companies by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* or International Military Services Ltd. or its subsidiaries, for each year since 1980.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has placed contracts with W. S. Atkins Ltd. and associated companies as follows:

Financial year	*Value of contracts* £
1982-83	80,730
1983-84	48,050
1984-85	45,950
1985-86	152,307
1986-87	155,265
1987-88	1,106,893
1988-89	850,961
1989-90	887,640
1990-91	422,233
1991-92	1,690,388

The nature of work includes research, development, design, feasibility and project studies, new building, utilities agreements and production. Records for earlier years are not available.

With regard to contracts placed by International Military Services Ltd., IMS ceased trading on 31 July 1991. Details of individual contracts concluded prior to this date are commercial in confidence.

Aircraft

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list each type of operational aircraft currently in service and the numbers of each.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) on 13 May, *Official Report*, column 152.

Iraq

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 5 June, to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), *Official Report*, column *672*, if he will provide details of the type and nature of the evidence that Iraq had developed a crude nuclear warhead design; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Iraqi documentation seized by the International Atomic Energy Authority's sixth nuclear inspection team provided the incontrovertible evidence of Iraq's development of a crude nuclear device. A report on that inspection is available in the Library.

Brigadier Anthony Cowgill

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance has been provided by his Department to Brigadier Anthony Cowgill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Brigadier Cowgill saw a number of open files from the Public Record Office in the Ministry of Defence. He also saw in the Ministry of Defence several open microfilms of allied documents from the national archives in Washington which that archive had sent to the Ministry of Defence for its permission for their release, as is the normal practice.

Public Records

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance in searching public records has been provided by his Department to researchers and authors in the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Whilst resources preclude us from undertaking detailed research for members of the public, we endeavour to be as helpful as possible with the many inquiries received in writing or orally, by directing enquirers to relevant material in the Public Record Office or elsewhere.

DEFENCE

Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the discussions that his Department has had with the Greenwich health authority and the South East Thames regional health authority about the future of the Queen Elizabeth military hospital; and if he will place copies of any relevant correspondence and other documentation in the Library.

Mr. Aitken: Officials of my Department have had exploratory talks with members of the Greenwich health authority and, more recently, with members of the South East Thames regional health authority about a number of proposals concerning the future of the Queen Elizabeth military hospital. These talks have been conducted in confidence.

El Alamein

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what representations he has received from British veterans of El Alamein about a memorial service to mark the 50th anniversary of the victory; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make it his policy that the allied victory at El Alamein in 1942 should be commemorated by a memorial service in London to mark the 50th Anniversary in October.

Mr. Aitken: The Ministry of Defence has received a small number of representations from veterans of the battle and a number of questions have been asked in the House of Lords.

The 50th anniversary of the battle will be commemorated in Egypt at a Commonwealth ceremony and at an international ceremony held jointly with Germany and Italy. I understand that 400 to 500 veterans will be present, in parties arranged by the Royal British Legion and the Eighth Army Association.

The Government do not arrange memorial services in London to commemorate particular battles of this kind. However, the Royal British Legion's annual festival at the Royal Albert hall will this year mark the 50th anniversary of the battle and I understand the Eighth Army Association is expecting 2,000 of its 3,000 members to be at its annual reunion in Blackpool on 31 October. In addition I understand that the Royal British Legion will invite the Eighth Army Association to lead the Remembrance Day parade.

Director of Public Prosecutions

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) on how many occasions his Department has written to the Director of Public Prosecutions drawing the attention of the Director of Public Prosecutions to the value of work done for his Department by individuals against whom the Director of Public Prosecutions is evaluating evidence with the intention of deciding to prosecute;

(2) whether he will publish the letter sent by his Department to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland before the final decision to prosecute Mr. Nelson outlining Mr. Nelson's services for the security forces in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Rifkind: It is not the practice to disclose the substance of consultations as to the public interest.

Housing Stock

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many dwellings owned by his Department remained vacant on 31 March this year, and on the same date in each of the previous two years, in each of the six district council areas in Cornwall; what arrangements have been agreed to make them available on a fixed-term basis for renting by the local authorities or housing associations; and if he will make a statement on his policy to enable the best possible use of housing stock in rural areas with major homelessness problems.

Mr. Aitken: The number of vacant dwellings owned by my Department in Cornwall over the last three years as at 31 March was as follows:

	Number
1990	118
1991	80
1992	98

Figures for individual district council areas are not available. The figure for 31 March 1992 represents just over 9 per cent. of our total stock and is in line with advice from outside consultants on the appropriate management margin needed to meet Defence requirements. Many of the vacant properties were either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work or modernisation, while others were already allotted to service families who were due to move in shortly. Wherever possible we do arrange leases of temporarily surplus houses to local authorities and housing associations. We currently have some 950 properties on lease throughout the United Kingdom, including 17 on lease in Cornwall to Kerrier district council.

The Department's policy is to dispose of all property which is surplus to its long term requirements. Of the 2 MOD dwellings currently being sold in Cornwall, 19 at Padstow were offered to the Council and to a local housing association but the offer was declined. They are now to be sold on the open market.

Supply Management Unit

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will transfer back to RAF Carlisle the deputy director of supply management 15 unit which is at present situated at RAF Harrogate.

Mr. Aitken: No. As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces announced to the House on 4 June, it is proposed that the RAF's support management organisation at Harrogate will relocate to Wyton as part of the RAF's new Logistics Command.

Defence Export Services Organisation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of staff of the Defence Export Services Organisation are seconded from industry; and what functions they perform.

Mr. Aitken: The Head of the Defence Export Services Organisation (HDES) and the international finance adviser (IFA) are both seconded from industry. The IFA

advises HDES and United Kingdom companies on the financing and credit insurance facilities available to support overseas defence sales.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff are employed in each of the overseas offices of the Defence Export Services Organisation and, in each case, what is the estimated annual cost of the office; and how many are employed in the London office.

Mr. Aitken: The following is a breakdown of the Defence Export Services Organisation overseas offices, the numbers of staff employed in each office and the estimated annual cost of each office:

1992-93

Office	*Staff numbers*	*Estimated costs £*
New Delhi	3	91,200
Riyadh	2	86,900
Kuala Lumpur	7	128,500
Seoul	3	109,600
Ankara	1	47,100
Kuwait	1	65,400
Canberra	2	70,700
Jakarta	3	75,800
Bangkok	2	68,800

The Defence staff in Washington (1992-93 cost estimate £600,000) are no longer included in the Defence Export Services Organisation budget.

There are 246 staff employed in the London office.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Public Petitions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to respond to the fourth report from the Select Committee on Procedure of Session 1991-92, on public petitions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The report was published on 21 May and I am still considering it.

HEALTH

Nurses

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to decrease the work load of national health service nurses.

Mr. Sackville: It is for NHS employers to ensure that units are adequately staffed to meet the workload requirements and agreed standards and to ensure that there is no excessive work burden on individual nurses.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to increase the training and support for community nurses when the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 comes into effect.

Mr. Sackville: It is for regional health authorities to calculate the overall demand for training non-medical staff, including community nurses and to top-slice sufficient funds for appropriate training places. The Department will be monitoring the way in which regions discharge this responsibility. We shall expect regions to co-ordinate their training plans with requirements identified in locally agreed community care plans.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will consider establishing confidential counselling for nurses at the unit level at all national health service hospitals.

Dr. Mawhinney: The provision of counselling services for NHS staff is a matter for local management. Where appropriate, they may form part of the local occupational health service.

Census Information

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when small area statistics of the 1991 census will be available to the public; when they were originally intended for publication; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: In my reply to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) on 2 June, *Official Report*, column *454*, I stated that every effort will be made to publish 1991 census county monitors by the end of September 1992. Eight were published by 16 June. These monitors contain summary statistics for all local authority districts on all the census topics for which answers were fully processed. The corresponding small area statistics for enumeration districts and wards in England and Wales and for output areas and postcode sectors in Scotland follow the publication of the monitors, and will be released county by county between June and October 1992. The original timetable for the release of these statistics was October 1991 to August 1992. For the reason for the processing problem which caused the delay I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the then Under-Secretary of State gave the then Member for Nottingham, South, Mr. Brandon-Bravo, on 5 March at columns *272-73*.

Further details of the census output timetable will be published in "Census Newsletters", copies of which are placed in the Library. The next issue, No. 22, will contain a revised timetable for the publication of individual county monitors.

Residential Care

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she plans to encourage dual registration of nursing and residential homes.

Mr. Yeo: It is for homes to decide what type of care they wish to offer. We have provided for dual registration so that a single home can provide both residential and nursing care.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to ensure that clients of nursing and residential homes are fully informed of the service available in their community when the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 comes into effect.

Mr. Yeo: The National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 requires local authorities to prepare community care plans in consultation with local health authorities, housing authorities, voluntary organisations and representatives of service users and their carers. These plans should be published and made widely available to the public.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she plans to monitor the placement of patients in residential and nursing homes when the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 comes into effect.

Mr. Yeo: We shall be monitoring the implementation of all the major provisions of the community care reforms.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the numbers of elderly people in Crewe and Nantwich living in *(a)* local authority nursing homes, *(b)* local authority residential homes and *(c)* private nursing homes for the years (i) 1985-86, (ii) 1990-91 and (iii) 1991-92.

Mr. Yeo: Nursing homes are not provided by local authorities.

At 31 March 1991 there were 1,747 people in local authority homes for elderly people in Cheshire including 240 in the Crewe and Nantwich area. This compared with 1,799 at 31 March 1986. The March 1986 comparative figure for the Crewe and Nantwich area is not known. The number includes some younger physically handicapped people, who are not separately identified.

Information is not collected centrally on the numbers of residents in private nursing homes. The number of beds designated for elderly people in private nursing homes in the Crewe health authority area at 31 March 1991 was 276 compared with 136 at 31 December 1986.

Information for 1991-92 is not yet available.

Hospital Managers

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will establish a code of conduct for managers in national health service hospitals.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no plans to establish a general code of conduct for NHS hospital managers. Guidance will continue to be issued on specific management matters as the need arises.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will create a training programme for managers of national health service hospitals in staff and personnel relations.

Dr. Mawhinney: The importance of good staff and personnel relations is being increasingly recognised by those involved in training managers of national health service hospitals. The general but strong view in the Department and NHS is that staff and personnel relations training should continue to be integrated into general management training rather than be compartmentalised, thus creating the danger of it being seen as an "optional extra".

NHS Contracts

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will take steps to preclude clauses in national health service contracts of employment which restrict freedom of speech, other than in respect of medical confidence.

Dr. Mawhinney: We shall shortly be consulting with professional interests, managers, and those representing patients, on proposed new guidance to clarify the basis on which NHS staff may express views about the provision of services. A balance must be struck between the duty of staff to raise matters of professional concern and the need to safeguard confidentiality.

Dentists

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average income of an NHS dentist, net of expenses, in the Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster family health services authority area.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information about dentists' net remuneration for particular family health services authority areas is not available centrally.

Eye Tests

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many eye tests were carried out in the London borough of Waltham Forest in each year since 1987.

Dr. Mawhinney: Figures are not available in respect of London boroughs. The numbers of NHS sight tests paid for in each financial year by the Redbridge and Waltham Forest family health services authority are shown in the table. The Department does not collect information on the volume of private sight tests carried out.

Year	*Number of sight tests*
1987-88	111,070
1988-89	118,100
1989-90	[1]54,960
1990-91	43,070

[1] It is estimated that there were 23,530 tests carried out before 1 April 1989—when NHS sight tests were restricted to certain groups in the population—for which payment was not made until the 1989-90 financial year. The remaining 31,430 paid for in 1989-90 do not represent a full year under the new system, because of the delay in payments.

Nicotine Patches

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will authorise the supply of nicotine patches for the treatment of smoking under the national health service.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she has any plans to make nicotine plaster patches available by prescription under the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: The supply of nicotine patches on prescription is currently being considered by the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances.

Abortion

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will make it her policy to ensure that women considering abortions have the option of access to ultrasound scanning facilities to enable them more fully to understand the nature of the operation about which they are being counselled; and to ensure that the existence of such an option is explained to them.

Mr. Sackville: The decision as to whether an ultrasound scan should be used in any particular case is a matter for the clinical judgment of the doctor concerned. Counselling should include the provision of any information the woman may wish to have about her condition or the operation being contemplated.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many women normally resident overseas visited the United Kingdom for abortions in the latest year for which figures are available; and what information she has on the total level of fees which was thus generated.

Mr. Sackville: In the period 1 October 1990 to 30 September 1991, 11,552 non-residents had abortions in England, Wales and Scotland. Fees paid will vary according to gestation, any complications and length of stay. The total is not known centrally.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the names and addresses of all those private clinics which are licensed by her Department for the performing of abortions, indicating where appropriate those which have special arrangements for late abortions, and giving the most recent two dates upon which an unannounced visit was made by officials representing her Department to each of those clinics to inspect their facilities and the service which they provided.

Mr. Sackville: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my right hon. Friend the then Minister for Health gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) on 3 February at columns *86-89*. Those private sector places approved to perform abortions over 20 and up to 24 weeks with dates of the last two visits by Department of Health officials are:

Approved place	*Date of last two visits*
Robert clinic, Birmingham	July 1991 and January 1992
Leigham clinic, London	October 1991 and March 1992
Rosslyn nursing home, East Twickenham, Middlesex	October 1991 and February 1992
Wistons nursing home, Brighton	September 1991 and November 1991
Raleigh nursing home, London	March 1992 and May 1992
Parkview clinic, London	December 1991 and May 1992

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of abortions performed under the terms of the Abortion Act 1967, in NHS facilities or in private clinics but at a cost to the NHS, in the latest year for which figures are available; what was the average cost of each of those abortions to the national health service; what is the resultant total cost of abortions to the NHS in that year; and whether these estimates include the cost of treating those patients who suffer adverse physical or mental reactions as a result of the abortion.

Mr. Sackville: The total number of abortions in England, Wales and Scotland performed under the National Health Service in 1990, either in NHS hospitals or through arrangements between NHS authorities and the private sector, was 93,212. The cost of an abortion varies according to gestation, any complications and length of stay. The average cost of a straightforward in-patient abortion in an NHS hospital is £270 at 1990-91 prices. This figure does not include the cost of any subsequent patient care.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total number of abortions performed under the Abortion Act 1967 since its implementation; and how many and what percentage of these abortions were performed *(a)* in respect of babies conceived as the result of rape and *(b)* under the social clause, ground II.

Mr. Sackville: A total of 3,688,096 abortions have been performed in Great Britain under the Abortion Act 1967 since its implementation. (This covers the period from the time when the Act came into force on 27 April 1968 until 30 September 1991, the latest date for which figures are available). Of these, 3,154,637 (85·5 per cent.) were performed on the ground that

"the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated."

The remaining information requested is not available in the precise form specified. As rape is not in itself a statutory ground for performing an abortion under the 1967 Act, and is not required to be specified on the notification form by the certifying doctor, the exact number of notifications of abortions associated with rape is not known. However, in some cases the information is volunteered, and arrangements have been made to code separately and analyse all notification forms which mention rape from 1987 in Great Britain. Of the 912,546 notifications received from the period 1987 to 30 September 1991 for abortions performed in Great Britain, 191 (0·02 per cent.) mentioned rape. Earlier, but non-comparable, data relating to abortions performed in England and Wales were collected clerically and published for the years 1968-73, in table 12 of the Registrar General's "Statistical Review, Supplement on Abortion", a copy of which is in the Library. The reliability of these earlier data is uncertain.

Dentists' Pay

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to delay the implementation of the 1992-93 dentists' remuneration from 8 July to a date later in the year to allow the fundamental review of dentists' remuneration to be finalised; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: It would not be helpful to delay the implementation of a revised fee scale beyond July. In 1991-92, dentists received on average some £12,000 more than the level of pay agreed by the Government following the recommendation of the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration (DDRB). The evidence suggests that the existing fee scale is continuing to provide substantially more than the DDRB recommended.

In 1992-93, even with the 7 per cent. fee reduction proposed, the average dentist is likely to receive some £5,000 more than the DDRB recommendation of £35,815. This proposal is fair to dentists, fair to their patients, the tax-payers, and fair to other national health service staff.

Dental remuneration is a complex, sensitive and important issue. We are looking to the review to develop a system which more effectively and more fairly remunerates all dentists for the important work they do.

Peto Institute

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made with the undertaking to contribute towards the development of the International

Peto Institute in Budapest; whether other OECD countries have contributed; how much of the United Kingdom Government grant has been spent; if she will list the principal elements of the new Institute which have already been paid for, and which will be paid for in the remainder of this financial year; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The United Kingdom Government have undertaken to contribute £5 million towards the costs of establishing the International Peto Institute in Budapest, which will provide conductive education for children with physical disabilities and training in conductive education. We are not aware that other OECD countries have contributed. The United Kingdom Government have made an initial payment of £1,750,000. Our agreement with the Hungarian Government provides that subsequent payments will be dependent upon progress with construction.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which of the agencies established to date are run on a trading fund basis; which are subject to gross running costs control; and which are subject to net running cost control.

Mr. Portillo: I have been asked to reply.

The following agencies operate as trading funds:

- Central Office of Information
- Companies House
- Fire Service College
- HMSO
- Patent Office
- Royal Mint
- The Buying Agency
- Vehicle Inspectorate

The following agencies operate under net running cost control:

- Accounts Services Agency
- ADAS Agency
- Building Research Establishment
- Central Veterinary Laboratory
- Civil Service College
- DVOIT
- Historic Royal Palaces
- Laboratory of the Government Chemist
- Land Registry
- Medicines Control Agency
- National Engineering Laboratory
- National Physical Laboratory
- Natural Resources Institute
- Ordnance Survey
- Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre
- Radiocommunications Agency
- Registers of Scotland
- Transport Research Laboratory
- Valuation Office
- Vehicle Certification Agency
- Warren Spring Laboratory
- Wilton Park Conference Centre

The following agencies operate under gross running cost control:

- Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments)
- Central Science Laboratory
- Central Statistical Office
- Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment[1]
- Compensation Agency
- Defence Research Agency
- Directorate General of Defence Accounts[1]
- Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency
- Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency
- Driving Standards Agency
- Duke of York's Royal Military School
- Employment Service
- Forensic Science Service
- Historic Scotland
- Hydrographic Office[1]
- Insolvency Service
- Intervention Board
- Meteorological Office
- Military Survey[1]
- National Weights and Measures Laboratory
- Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation[1]
- NHS Estates
- Occupational Health Service
- Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland
- Planning Inspectorate
- Public Record Office
- Queen Victoria School
- RAF Maintenance[1]
- Rate Collection Agency
- Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency
- Scottish Agricultural Science Agency
- Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency
- Service Children's School (North West Europe)[1]
- Social Security Agency
- Social Security Benefits Agency
- Social Security Contributions Agency
- Social Security Information Technology Services Agency
- Social Security Resettlement Agency
- Teachers' Pensions Agency
- Training and Employment Agency
- United Kingdom Passport Agency
- Veterinary Medicines Directorate

[1] Defence Support Agency.

Customs and Excise and Inland Revenue (excluding the Valuation Office) are departments operating fully on Next Steps lines with 30 executive units and 34 executive offices respectively. Gross control of running costs applies to both departments except in the case of Inland Revenue's Valuation Office which, as shown, operates as a free standing agency under net control.

A few agencies, such as the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, shown as operating under gross control, have limited freedom to utilise income to meet expenditure subject to guidelines agreed with the parent Department and the Treasury.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 19 June 1992

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Public Appointments

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the public appointments which are made by the Lord Chancellor giving *(a)* the name of the person appointed, *(b)* the period of office and *(c)* the salary.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor makes some 1,800 public appointments. Full details can be provided only at disproportionate cost but the table shows the public bodies to which he makes appointments and the current number of appointees.

The Lord Chancellor's Public Appointments

Body	*Number of Appointments*
Insolvency Rules Committee	7
County Court Rule Committee	10
Supreme Court Rule Committee	11
Land Registration Rule Committee	5
Family Proceedings Rule Committee	8
Crown Court Rule Committee	9
Advisory Committees on General Commissioners of Income Tax	520
Advisory Committees on JPs in England (excluding the Duchy of Lancaster) and Wales	946
Magistrates' Courts Rule Committee	13
Judicial Studies Board	56
Advisory Council on Public Records	10
Agency Chief Executives	2
Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct	17
Authorised Conveyancing Practitioners Board	6
Legal Services Ombudsman	1
Legal Aid Advisory Committee	10
Legal Aid Board	11
Advisory Committee on the Children Act	13
Council on Tribunals	15
Law Commission	5
Northern Ireland Court Service—Advisory Committees on General Commissioners of Income Tax (NI)	15
Advisory Committees on JPs in Northern Ireland	57
Advisory Committees on Juvenile Court Lay Panel	11
Legal Aid Advisory Committee (NI)	11
Insolvency Rules Advisory Committee	8
County Court Rules Committee	9
Supreme Court Rules Committee	9
Crown Court Rules Committee	11
Matrimonial Causes Rules Committee	11
Magistrates' Courts Rules Committee	9

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what are the current levels of outstanding appeals for *(a)* the Immigration Tribunal and *(b)* the Immigration Appeal Tribunal.

Mr. John M. Taylor: As at 31 May 1992, 27,879 cases were outstanding before immigration adjudicators and 552 before the Immigration Appeal Tribunal.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the average period from the time the explanation statement is received by the Immigration Tribunal to the date for the hearing.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The current period from the time the explanatory statement is received by the Immigration Appellate Authorities (IAA) to the date of the hearing before the adjudicator can be shown as follows:

(a) The time from the date the explanatory statement is received by the IAA to the date copies of the case papers are dispatched to the parties' representatives in this country is up to five days;

(b) the time taken for the parties to prepare their case before indicating to the IAA that they are ready to proceed to a hearing averages six months;

(c) the time for the hearing to take place once the parties have indicated readiness to proceed to a hearing is from four weeks to six months.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many county court oficers are employed; and, of these, how many are *(a)* black, *(b)* Asian and *(c)* women.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of county court officers employed by the Lord Chancellor's Department is 5,018 at 12 June 1992. Approximately 78 per cent. of these have responded to the Department's ethnic origin questionnaire. Of the officers who have an ethnic record, 94 are black and 91 are Asian. A total of 3,382 of the officers are women.

Combined court centres deal with county and Crown court matters. A total of 2,484 officers work within the combined court centres. We are not able to distinguish the number who work solely on county court matters. Approximately 80 per cent. of combined court centre officers have responded to the Department's ethnic origin questionnaire. Of the offices who have an ethnic record, 13 are black and 35 are Asian. A total of 1,666 of the officers are women.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the number of district judges; and how many are *(a)* black, *(b)* Asian and *(c)* women.

Mr. John M. Taylor: On 1 June 1992 there were 266 district judges, including those in the principal registry of the Family Division of the High Court.

The ethnic origin of members of the judiciary and of applicants for judicial posts was not recorded prior to the autumn of 1991 and the formal records in respect of ethnic origin are therefore incomplete.

It is, however, believed that there are at present no black district judges. There is one Asian—who is a woman—and 18 women holding this office.

Legal Aid

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the current level of expenditure for the year 1991-92 in England and Wales on legal aid in respect of *(a)* civil litigation and *(b)* criminal litigation; and what proposals he has to reduce such expenditure levels.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The estimated outturn of gross expenditure on legal aid in England and Wales in 1991-92 —excluding advice and assistance under the "green form" or duty solicitor schemes—is:

	£ million
Civil legal aid	540
Criminal legal aid	400

These figures represent an increase of 28 per cent. overall on the equivalent figures for 1990-91. The Lord Chancellor has announced measures, including the introduction of standard fees in the magistrates courts, which will help to control the rate of increase in legal aid costs in future.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what are his proposals for establishing eligibility for legal aid within the framework of altered levels for legal aid expenditure.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The financial limits for legal aid are reviewed annually. Most limits were uprated by 7 per cent. in April. Financial eligibility is being considered more generally in the review of financial conditions.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proposals he has to limit admissibility of applications for legal aid for less serious charges; and what criteria he proposes to apply.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is for the courts to decide whether to grant criminal legal aid in a particular case in accordance with the statutory criteria laid down by section 22 of the Legal Aid Act 1988.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department by what amounts he proposes to make alterations in the level of legal aid expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Future plans for legal aid expenditure are set out in the report on the Government's expenditure plans 1992-93 to 1994-95 for the Lord Chancellor's and Law Officers' Departments (Cm 1910) published in February 1992. The Lord Chancellor will if necessary seek additional provision for legal aid in the current financial year.

EDUCATION

Toxic Shock Syndrome

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidelines are available for school governing bodies on the content and organisation of sex education; and whether they include information on tampon-related toxic shock syndrome.

Mr. Forth: The Department's circular 11/87 includes advice to school governing bodies on their responsibilities for determining their policy both on sex education and on the content and organisation of any sex education to be offered. The National Curriculum Council has issued guidance to all maintained schools in England, offering advice on how schools might incorporate topics about sex education and personal hygiene into their wider programmes of health education. Neither of the documents discusses the detailed content of the curriculum, which is for school governing bodies and teachers to decide.

Departmental Staff

Dr. Liam Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many civil servants and educational advisers work for his Department.

Mr. Forman: The Department employs 2,471 civil servants. That figure includes 460 in Her Majesty's inspectorate, of whom the majority, together with their support staff, will transfer to the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, which is to be constituted as a separate non-ministerial department from 1 September 1992.

Parents Charter

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what progress has been made in implementing the parents charter commitments regarding the annual publication of comparative information about school performance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patten: I am today publishing regulations and a circular that begin to implement our commitment in the parents charter to provide improved information for parents and the wider community about the performance of all local schools. In particular, they set out the arrangements under which I will publish this November comparative tables of public examination results for schools in the area of each local education authority.

As a result, from autumn 1992, parents choosing among local secondary schools will be sent comparative tables showing school by school the latest public examination results and will find in each maintained school's prospectus, and in that of each city technology college, improved information on public examination results and truancy rates.

Secondary schools are also being asked to include in their prospectuses and governors' annual reports details of the routes that their pupils take at ages 16, 17 and 18, showing staying-on rates and the destinations of those who leave school.

Independent secondary schools are being asked to join in these arrangements voluntarily in 1992, and I expect that most will wish to do so.

The new arrangements were the subject of consultation with local authorities and others in January this year. As a result of that consultation, I have decided not to impose the requirement to publish comparative tables on local education authorities this year, but to arrange central publication and distribution through primary schools myself.

From 1993, further regulations to be made under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 will cover the complete parents charter commitments, securing by law the inclusion in comparative tables of all schools, including independent ones, and extending their scope to cover truancy rates, national curriculum assessment results and the routes taken by older pupils.

Parents and the wider community have a right to know what is being achieved by our schools for our children. I hope that schools will make every effort to meet our requirements and requests this year. Informed choice by

parents is a valuable force for good in education, and we should make sure that choice is based on the best possible information.

Copies of the regulations and circular will be placed in the Library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fisheries Byelaws

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what draft sea fisheries byelaws are currently awaiting his approval; and when these were first submitted to his Department.

Mr. Curry: Twenty-three formally made sea fisheries committees' (SFCs) byelaws are awaiting ministerial confirmation, which cannot be given until the necessary legal, technical and EC Commission considerations have been completed. Eight concern shell fisheries, of which five were submitted this year and three in May 1991; six, received in the last six months, deal with the extension of sea fishery districts from three to six miles; three are concerned with fixed engines, two of which were submitted in the last month; two byelaws on minimum landing sizes of fish were submitted in May 1991 and January 1992 and two on length of vessels in May 1991 and April 1992; one byelaw on areas where fishing for bass is allowed was submitted in May 1991 and one on gear type in January 1992. A further seven made byelaws are awaiting SFC confirmation on certain technical points.

Bird Culls

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications for licences to cull *(a)* cormorants and *(b)* goosanders and mergansers in England and Wales were submitted to his Department in each of the past five years; and how many of these were granted.

Mr. Soames: The agriculture Departments in England and Wales do not issue licences to cull the species of bird in question. Licences are issued only to shoot a limited number of birds as an aid to scaring.

With regard to licences for the killing or taking of cormorants, the requested information on the number of applications received is not yet available for the Ministry's north-east regional service centre. Details for the rest of England and Wales are as follows:

Year	*Applications received*	*Licences issued*
1987	6	3
1988	4	2
1989	3	2
1990	9	4
1991	8	3

A completed table including the missing information will be provided as soon as possible.

On mergansers and goosanders, only one application has been received for a licence to shoot these species in the last five years, in Wales in 1988, and no licence was granted.

Salmon

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to ensure that annual salmon catch statistics are collated and published more quickly.

Mr. Curry: The collation and publication of salmon catch statistics in England and Wales are the responsibility of the National Rivers Authority. It is already taking steps to publish these statistics more quickly, and this is welcome.

Gill Nets

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies he has made of the effect of the ban on the carriage and use of monofilament gill nets in Scottish waters under the Inshore Fishing (Salmon and Migratory Trout) (Prohibition of Gill Nets) (Scotland) Order 1986 and the Inshore Fishing (Prohibition of Carriage of Monofilament Gill Nets) (Scotland) Order 1986; and if he will now use his powers under the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1967 to apply similar restrictions in English and Welsh waters.

Mr. Curry: The ban in Scottish waters was primarily introduced to protect salmon. The Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975, as amended by the Salmon Act 1986, provides for control of nets in English and Welsh inshore waters.

Set-aside Scheme

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the figures on a county basis in England for 1991-92 of *(a)* the number of serious irregularities of the set-aside scheme, *(b)* the number of minor breaches of the scheme and *(c)* the number of cases where payments were withheld in full or in part; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The 1991-92 set-aside year runs from 1 October 1991 to 30 September 1992, with payments being made in the last quarter of 1992. Consequently, it is not yet possible to provide this information for the current set-aside year.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the amount of payments under the set-aside scheme that have been recovered or withheld in each county in England in 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Set-aside payments for 1991-92 will be made in the last quarter of 1992. Consequently it is not yet possible to provide this information.

Clenbuterol

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will outline the measures in force to stop the import of beef cattle fed with the drug clenbuterol.

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* Under European Community rules, primary responsibility for ensuring that beef cattle fed with clenbuterol do not move between member states rests with the member states of

origin. Thereafter, animals imported into Great Britain from other member states are subject to surveillance at the port of entry and to ante mortem inspection at the slaughterhouse. All animals, including imported animals, are also subject to the routine Great Britain residue surveillance programme on farm and at slaughterhouses as required under Community rules.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which executive agencies have had their framework document amended since their establishment.

Mr. Waldegrave: This is primarily a matter for departmental ministers and the chief executives of the agencies for which they are responsible. However, our records show that four agencies have had their framework documents amended since their establishment.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Press Complaints

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he intends to publish concerning a statutory press complaints commission.

Mr. Mellor: The Government have made it clear that they intend to review the effectiveness of press self-regulation over the period from 1 January 1991 to 30 June 1992. The proposals and the form of their publication will be decided in the light of that review. I shall make a further announcement about the nature of the review shortly.

British Library

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he plans to review the British Library St. Pancras project.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. I am commissioning consultants: to establish whether the current budget for stage 1A and the completion phase of the St. Pancras project is adequate and whether the strategy and organisation for procurement of the completion phase are likely to be the most effective means of ensuring the timely and successful conclusion of the project; to audit the status and quality of the design information for the completion phase; to review the status of the British library's projects for the occupation of the new building, including the reliability of cost estimates for the work; to formalise the role of the British library in relation to the building project; and subsequently to audit the status of documentation for the procurement of the completion phase to ensure that it is unambiguous, precise and comprehensive.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Computer Services

Mr. Page: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what progress is being made towards implementing the proposals in the fourth report from the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) of Session 1989-90 on computer services for Members (HC 614).

Mr. Beith: The Services Committee report, which was generally welcomed in an Adjournment debate on 8 July last year, proposed the installation of a new broad-band cable system throughout the parliamentary estate capable of carrying television channels, the annunciator system, and data traffic, and recommended that appropriate studies be made to identify the specifications of such a system and the information technology services which might be provided for Members, their staff and staff of the House.

In the light of the debate, the House of Commons Commission gave immediate authority for the initial studies proposed by the Services Committee to be undertaken by consultants. In December 1991, the Commission authorised further expenditure, of up to £200,000 in financial year 1991-92, and up to £180,000 in financial year 1992-93, for further investigative and exploratory work towards the possible introduction of two parallel networks—one to carry television communications, and the second to carry data traffic—as recommended in the consultants' initial report. The Commission also invited the newly appointed Information Committee to liaise with the consultants, the relevant Officers of the two Houses, and the appropriate committee in the House of Lords, in the further development of plans for such a system.

The Commission is grateful to the former Information Committee, to the joint working party established by them, and to the Officers concerned, for the progress which has been made during the early part of this year.

At its meeting on 18 May, the Commission approved expenditure of about £720,500 in the current financial year to facilitate the installation of a pilot network project, as recommended by the Information Committee, in the new temporary accommodation to be provided in the autumn of this year at No. 7 Millbank. The Commission understands that this pilot scheme will assist the Information Committee—and the appropriate committee of the House of Lords—in reaching final conclusions about the nature of any network which they would wish to see installed in the parliamentary estate as a whole.

Any network for the House as a whole is likely to be expensive to install and thereafter to operate. For this reason, the Commission is concerned to ensure that no final decisions are taken until a clear picture of the likely commitments has emerged and the full costs have been carefully and expertly scrutinised. It therefore intends to invite the new Finance and Services Committee to assess and make recommendations to the Commission about the financial implications of any scheme which may be proposed by the Information Committee, in accordance with the consultative arrangements provided under Standing Orders Nos. 125 (Domestic Committees) and 125A (Finance and Services Committee).

Finally, in accordance with long-established practice, the Commission will not feel able to seek estimate provision for a major new service of this kind until the service itself has been specifically approved by the House. This stage cannot be reached until the Information Committee has had an opportunity to evaluate and report on the complex issues involved, and until the Finance and

Services Committee has had an opportunity fully to evaluate the financial implications of any proposed scheme.

PRIME MINISTER

India

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister when he next expects to visit India; and what matters he plans to discuss.

The Prime Minister: I look forward to visiting India when dates can be agreed. The issues for discussion would be decided nearer the time.

Expo '92 Fair

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what has been the cost of the British pavilion at the Expo '92 Fair in Seville; which Minister was present at the opening ceremony; and what consideration in regard to the local ecology were taken into account in the preparation and construction of the United Kingdom pavilion.

The Prime Minister: The British pavilion at Expo '92 cost £14 million to construct. Its design is environmentally sensitive, using sails and water as shields from the sun, thus reducing its energy consumption substantially. Sir John Ure, United Kingdom Commissioner General, represented Britain at the Expo '92 opening ceremony.

Earth Summit

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will set out for each Government Department represented at the Earth summit in Rio de Janeiro, the number, grade and role of the 24 officials and eight junior support staff in the United Kingdom delegation; if he will list the title of each document submitted to the Rio de Janeiro conference; and what responses were made to each document.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Environment and Countryside gave on 9 June 1992, column *147*.

The Government submitted the following documents to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development secretariat:

"This Common Inheritance": 1990 Environment White Paper.

"This Common Inheritance": first-year report.

United Nations Environment Programme United Kingdom's non-governmental organisation Agenda 21 report.

Local government statement on United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources' "Caring for the Earth" report; and

Inter-Agency Committee on Global and Environmental Change report on United Kingdom research.

No formal response has been received to any of the documents as they were submitted for information only.

Peace Dividend

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister what level of peace dividend he expects the United Kingdom to achieve over the next five years on current Government policies.

The Prime Minister: The Government's expenditure plans for the next three years were set out by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Autumn Statement (Cm 1729). These show the underlying cost of the defence programme being reduced significantly in real terms. No decisions have yet been taken on expenditure in later years. The Government remain committed to the maintenance of a strong and effective defence for the United Kingdom and its interests.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Expenditure

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the long-term target for public spending as a proportion of gross domestic product compared to present levels and those of 1982.

Mr. Portillo: The Government's objective is that public spending should take a declining share of national income over time. The ratio of public spending to GDP is expected to be 43 per cent. this year. This compares with a ratio of 47½ per cent. in 1982-83.

Maxwell Group

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will meet the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board to discuss publication of the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation report on the Maxwell affair.

Mr. Nelson: I intend to meet the chairman soon to discuss a range of issues.

Mortgage Tax Relief

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current cost to the Exchequer of mortgage interest tax relief.

Mr. Dorrell: The cost of mortgage interest tax relief for 1992-93 is provisionally estimated at £5·8 billion.

Income Tax

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the reduction in income tax in 1992-93 compared with the 1978-79 indexed regime broken down into the top 1 per cent., 5 per cent., 10 per cent. and bottom 50 per cent. of taxpayers showing the total reduction and the average gain.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 18 June 1992]:* Latest estimates of the annual change in income tax liability resulting from the changes in tax rates, allowances, and thresholds are in the table. The 1978-79 income tax regime has been indexed to 1992-93 levels by reference to the statutory formula, and allowing for independent taxation.

For the purposes of these calculations, the indexed regime of 1978-79 has been applied directly to the income base of 1992-93. In practice, retention of the 1978-79 regime, indexed as appropriate, for the intervening years would have led to changes in the income base.

Reductions in income tax per individual[1] in 1992-93 compared with the 1978-79 indexed regime

Quantile group of individual taxpayers	*Total reduction at 1992-93 prices £ million*	*Average reduction at 1992-93 prices £*
Top 1 per cent.	8,700	33,300
Top 5 per cent.	13,100	10,000
Top 10 per cent.	15,200	6,000
Bottom 50 per cent.	4,800	400
All taxpayers	31,400	1,200

[1] Individuals liable to income tax under the 1978-79 indexed regime.

TRANSPORT

Network SouthEast

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will require British Rail, when reporting on its compliance with the quality of service objectives for Network SouthEast, to specify the reasons for late running or cancellations of services.

Mr. Freeman: I expect Network SouthEast to tell passengers the reasons for delays and cancellations as they happen.

Orange Badge Scheme

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the criteria for eligibility for the orange badge scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have no plans to review the eligibility criteria. New regulations were introduced on 2 March following a major review which looked at all aspects of the scheme, including the eligibility criteria. It would be premature to contemplate any further changes until we see how the new regulations are working.

East-West Routes

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions his officials have had with officers of Oxfordshire county council about extending the east-west route beyond the Buckinghamshire-Oxfordshire border.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Since July 1989, my officials have had six formal meetings with officials of Oxfordshire county council about the strategy for extending the east-west route from west of Aylesbury to Oxford. In addition, they gave a presentation to the council's officers and members in July 1991, and my predecessor received a delegation of officers and members led by the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) in December 1991.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will publish the terms of reference he has set for the study of the need for a new east-west strategic route between Kent and Hampshire; and who has been commissioned to carry out the study.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We will not consider making a start on the Kent-Hampshire study until work now in progress on the construction of a regional traffic model is further advanced.

Road Grants

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on which occasions, in the past five years, he has offered 100 per cent. grants to highway authorities for the construction of particular roads; and what criteria he operates when determining whether to provide 100 per cent. grants for local road schemes.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: In the past five years the Department has offered 100 per cent. grants to local highway authorities for the road schemes:

A15 Laggan and Redbourne bypass, Humberside
A120 Stansted-Braintree, Essex
A418 Leighton Linslade bypass, Bedfordshire
A602 Little Wymondley bypass, Hertfordshire
A418 Wing bypass, Buckinghamshire
A134 Fornham St. Martin, Suffolk
Black Country Spine road, West Midlands
M56-A6 (M), Manchester airport link road (central section)
A15-A16 Market Deeping-Deeping St. James bypass, Lincolnshire
A158 Scremby, Lincolnshire

Our practice is to use this power sparingly for roads which will be trunked on completion, where the local highway authority has made such progress that significant delay would be caused if the scheme were promoted by the Department.

Inspectorate

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to set up an inspectorate for public transport.

Mr. Freeman: There are already a number of inspectorates and similar bodies responsible for overseeing various aspects of public transport. We have no plans to create any new inspectorate.

British Rail (Privatisation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will provide a list of the accountancy firms which are advising him for the privatisation of British Rail.

Mr. Freeman: Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte is advising on liberalisation of access to the rail network.

East London River Crossing

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he plans to answer the letters sent to him by the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford on 13 January and 13 February regarding the east London river crossing; what recent communications he has had with the European Commission about the proposal; and what steps he now plans to take in respect of the proposal.

Mr. Norris: I am sorry that the hon. Member did not receive a reply to her letters. The United Kingdom sent its response to the European Commission's article 169 letter on 17 December. There have since been informal discussions with the Commission. Its formal response has not yet been received. In the meantime, preparatory work towards the construction of the east London river crossing continues but no contracts for the construction of this important and urgently needed scheme have yet been let.

Marine Safety

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in implementing *(a)* recommendations 5, 15 and 17, *(b)* 20 and 24, *(c)* 4 and *(d)* 19 of the marine accident investigation branch report into the Marchioness disaster.

Mr. Norris: Recommendation 5 is to be given legislative force by regulations. A consultative document was issued in January 1992, and it is planned to bring these regulations into force in Autumn 1992.

On recommendation 15, a consultative document was issued in September 1991 and it is planned to bring these regulations into force in Autumn 1992.

A consultative document on recommendation 17 was issued in September 1991. It is planned to bring regulations in respect of river craft into force in Autumn 1992.

A revised consultative document on recommendations 20 and 24 was issued in November 1991, and it is planned to bring the two sets of regulations into force in Autumn 1992.

On recommendation 4, action in respect of United Kingdom ships has been completed; the longer-term development of internationally applicable requirements depends upon the success of our proposals at the International Maritime Organisation, which will be considered in December 1992.

Action on recommendation 19 was completed in February 1992.

Roads, Coventry

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to give his decision on the Coventry north-south road, phase 1; and what assessment he has made of the effect of this scheme on the economy and the environment in Coventry, North-East.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Decisions on the Coventry city council north-south orders and scheme are expected in early July. The responsibility for the assessment of the effect of the scheme on Coventry, North-East is essentially one for the local authority that sponsored the scheme. However, these issues were covered at the inquiries and have been reported on by the inspector. The Secretary of State will give full consideration to the report before making his decision.

ENVIRONMENT

Ofwat

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the role, responsibilities and powers of the Office of Water Services to ensure effective limitation of charges to the consumer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Present legislation gives the Director General of Water Services the powers he needs to fulfil his role of controlling increases in charges and protecting consumers.

Council Tax

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cost so far of carrying out valuations in preparation for the introduction of council tax; what is his estimate of the total cost; and when he expects the completion of valuations in preparation for the introduction of the council tax.

Mr. Robin Squire: The cost of valuing 19 million properties in England for council tax and producing valuation lists is expected to be £70 million. To date, payments of some £30 million have been made by my Department to the Valuation Office Agency, which is responsible for supervising the valuation exercise. Private sector valuers have now, subject to quality control procedures, completed their work. The Valuation Office Agency expects to complete its own valuation work in the near future and to schedule.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the first degree obtained by the chief executive of the planning inspectorate; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded.

Mr. Baldry: The first degree of the chief executive is Master of Arts—having read geography—of Cambridge university.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the maximum salary payable, including performance-related element, and the length of time of the contract of the chief executive of the planning inspectorate.

Mr. Baldry: The maximum salary payable to the chief executive is £55,700 per annum. His term of appointment ends with his retirement in September 1994.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was spent on events and publicity surrounding the launch of the planning inspectorate as an agency; and whether the cost was borne by the parent department or the new agency.

Mr. Baldry: The total amount spent was £12,300, all borne by the agency.

Housing Finance, Harrogate

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total sum received from the sale of council houses by the Harrogate borough council in 1991-92.

Mr. Baldry: During 1991-92 Harrogate borough council received £1·642 million from the sale of 73 council dwellings.

Carlisle City Council

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what receipts have been received by Carlisle city council in each year since 1987 through the sale of council houses, land and other buildings.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is given in the table

Carlisle DC: Total Sales of Fixed Assets

	£'000
1987-88	5,926
1988-89	6,619
1989-90	9,413
1990-91	4,402
1991-92	[1]2,268

[1] Provisional

Air Quality

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what air quality tests have been carried out in the county of Durham since 1987; and if he will publish the results.

Mr. Maclean: Airborne concentrations of smoke and sulphur dioxide and acid deposition have been measured at Government monitoring sites in the county since 1987 —and for some years before. A survey of nitrogen dioxide concentrations was undertaken last year as part of our national study to compare results of an earlier survey in 1986. All the monitoring results have been published in reports by Warren Spring laboratory and copies have been placed in the Library.

Environmental Reports

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will make arrangements to obtain the annual environmental reports produced by companies registered in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: There is no statutory requirement on companies registered in the United Kingdom to produce annual environmental reports. However, I very much welcome the increasing trend for companies to report on their environmental performance, and my Department is glad to receive such reports.

Rivers (Flows)

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what report he has received from the National Rivers Authority on the progress of the campaign to combat low flows in 20 designated English rivers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The National Rivers Authority programme for ameliorating low flows in certain rivers is being discussed with the relevant water companies. There is continuing discussion of the programme between the NRA and the Department in the context of the annual corporate plan on which grant-in-aid decisions are based.

Caravans

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish a consultation paper on caravan sites.

Mr. Baldry: We are working with all practicable speed, and hope to issue shortly a consultation paper to fulfil our manifesto undertaking to review the Caravan Sites Act 1968 with the aim of reducing the nuisance of illegal camping by travellers.

Marsham Street Site

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to progress the sale or redevelopment of the site at 2 Marsham street.

Mr. Baldry: The Department has appointed Montagu Evans in association with St. Quintin to advise on the planning and development potential of the site at 2 Marsham street. This advice is a necessary precursor to any decisions on sale or redevelopment. Decisions will be taken in due course in the light of this advice and the Government's need for accommodation in the Westminster area.

Refrigerants

Mr. Deva: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what decisions he has made following recent consultations on the Government's proposal to ban the import and supply to the United Kingdom market of refrigerant in disposable containers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: In view of the clear environmental benefits, and with the support expressed by the refrigeration industry, we have decided to proceed with a ban on disposable containers. The use of such containers leads to emissions of ozone-depleting substances causing damage to the ozone layer, because the heel of chlorofluorocarbons that remains is usually vented to the atmosphere before disposal of the cylinder. Furthermore, containers that are designed to be thrown away rather than reused act are a disincentive to good practice in the industry and particularly to the recovery and recycling of CFCs. In the light of the views expressed in the consultation, we have now decided that the ban should apply to all sizes of disposable container, with an exemption for research and development. The legislation, which will be introduced as soon as possible, will require EC approval.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list all those functions and areas in his Department and associated agencies that have been identified for market testing in the wake of the White Paper "Competing for Quality".

The Attorney-General: Proposals for market testing relating to the Departments for which I am responsible are being considered, together with those relating to other Government Departments, and an announcement will be made shortly.

Anabolic Steroids

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration has been given by the Director of Public Prosecutions to the prosecution of those alleged by the "World in Action" television programme of 15 June to be trading in anabolic steroids; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I will write to the hon. Member.

SCOTLAND

Communication Scotland

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what departments or agencies of the Scottish Office used the services of the Communication Scotland advertising agency prior to its collapse.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 17 June 1992]:* There is no record of any Scottish Office department or agency having used the services of the Communication Scotland advertising agency.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Leningrad Model Farm

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress the Overseas Development Administration has made with the establishment of a model farm in the Leningrad Oblast.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A mission, sponsored by the joint assistance unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, visited the Agrarian university and Pushkinskoye training farm near St. Petersburg from 29 March to 3 April 1992 to carry out a feasibility study on the establishment of a private farming company.

The mission's main recommendation was that a detailed business development plan for the Pushkinskoye farm should be prepared as a precursor to implementing a project expected to last between 18 and 36 months. This recommendation has been accepted and we hope that work on the business development plan will begin shortly.

Aid and Trade Provision

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Overseas Development Administration's review of aid and trade provision, mentioned in the Foreign Affairs Committee fourth special report, Session 1991-92, on Foreign and Commonwealth Office/Overseas Development Administration expenditure 1992, annex 4 will be completed; and whether he will publish the results.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This review by officials has now been completed and is under consideration by Ministers. No decision on publication has been taken.

Aid

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the discussion of untying EC aid at the last Council of Ministers meeting; and what proposals Her Majesty's Government have to raise the issue further.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: At the Council of EC Development Ministers on 4 May, there was a wide-ranging but inconclusive discussion of a Commission paper which considered possible ways to untie member states' bilateral development aid at Community level. The Council asked the Commission to submit a new document for its next meeting in November.

Africa

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how much aid the Government have committed so far for the current emergency situation in southern Africa on a country-by-country basis;

(2) whether he is prepared to give more aid to southern Africa in response to the recent appeals of Governments in the region.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has so far committed more than £38 million in response to the drought in southern Africa as follows:

Country	*Allocation £'000*	*Description*
Lesotho	25	Support for non-governmental organisation activities
Malawi	6,000	Humanitarian assistance to be allocated
	1,000	Emergency feeding programme
	67	Support for non-governmental organisation activities
Mozambique	3,900	Food aid
	1,420	Support for non-governmental organisation activities
Namibia	45	Support for non-governmental organisation activities
South Africa	215	Support for non-governmental organisation activities
Swaziland	42	Support for non-governmental organisation activities
Tanzania	28	Support for non-governmental organisation activities
Zambia	10,000	Balance of payments support
	237	Support for non-governmental organisation activities
Zimbabwe	7,500	Balance of payments support
	124	Support for non-governmental organisation activities
	791	Other drought-related assistance
Unallocated	1,925	Non-governmental organisation support/TC assistance
	5,000	Food aid (intended mainly for Mozambique)
Total	38,319	

In addition to the above, Britain is contributing a further £12·5 million to the cost of food aid (364,300 tonnes) allocated to the countries of southern Africa under the European Community's special food aid programme.

The Government will continue to monitor the situation closely and are considering what additional assistance they can make available.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid is planned for refugees and displaced people in southern Africa; what assistance is being considered by the United Kingdom to displaced people in Khartoum; and if he will seek action by the United Nations to protect displaced people in Khartoum and to provide access to those in need in Mogadishu.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are providing assistance, both directly and through the World Food Programme and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and our share of EC actions, to Mozambican refugees and displaced people. We recently made a donation of 5,000

tonnes of food aid for Mozambican refugees in Malawi. We have also made an initial allocation of £2·5 million for emergency and rehabilitation projects in Mozambique which will benefit displaced, as well as drought and war-affected, people. In Angola we have contributed £100,000 to help the United Nations Development Programme to co-ordinate relief operations in that country.

We recently donated 2,000 tonnes of food worth £530,000 to displaced people in Khartoum, bringing the total of our assistance to this group since 1991 to £1·09 million. We continue to give close support to United Nations-led efforts to negotiate better treatment for the displaced and secure access for relief supplies and non-governmental organisation personnel.

We fully support current United Nations efforts to provide relief to the needy in Mogadishu. In 1992, we have donated humanitarian aid worth £3·6 million, including 12,100 tonnes of bilateral food aid. Following the ceasefire agreed by the rival factions in March, food is now being delivered to Mogadishu by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is being offered for recovery and rehabilitation in *(a)* Somalia, *(b)* Ethiopia, *(c)* Eritrea, *(d)* Namibia and *(e)* Angola.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom is providing assistance for recovery and rehabilitation as follows:

Somalia: Our emergency aid, valued at some £10 million since January 1991—including our share of EC assistance—includes finance for projects addressing rehabilitation needs.

Ethiopia and Eritrea: Under the bilateral programme, we are continuing to support rehabilitation projects in the natural resources sector through non-governmental organisations. We shall also be making a significant contribution to the process of recovery through our share of actions planned by the World bank and the European Community. Our humanitarian aid, valued at over £53 million since January 1991, including our share of EC assistance, also includes finance for emergency projects with a rehabilitation element.

Namibia: The bilateral aid programme, totalling some £2·4 million in 1991-92 covers activities in a number of key sectors, including education, public administration and the police.

Angola: We are now processing proposals to rehabilitate water supplies and a bridge.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the answer on 22 May to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden), *Official Report*, columns *339-46*, concerning wages councils, if she will give details as to the two prosecutions for underpayment of wages in Scotland in 1991; which employers were prosecuted; and if she will publish details of the offences.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is shown:

Employer	*Details of offences*
Allardyce Cafe (Stonehaven) Ltd. Stonehaven	Failure to pay statutory minimum remuneration to two workers
Snooker Masters Ltd. Wishaw Lanarkshire	Failure to pay statutory minimum remuneration to four workers. The keeping of wage records known to be false in a material particular.

Training

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many 16 and 17-year-olds in Sunderland have left their youth training scheme placements prematurely in *(a)* 1990 and *(b)* 1991; and what are the latest figures for 1992.

(2) how many 16 and 17-year-olds in Sunderland completed their YTS placements in *(a)* 1990 and *(b)* 1991 and subsequently obtained full-time employment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not available in the precise form requested. Information is, however, available on the percentages of all YT leavers in the Wearside training and enterprise council area, which includes Sunderland, as follows:

Youth training leavers in Wearside (per cent.)

	Leaving early/ transferring between schemes	*Completing planned training*	*Not stated/not known*	*Completing training and in full-time employment*[1]
Leavers in:				
1990-91	53	31	16	61
April-August 1991[2]	42	35	23	65

[1] This relates to respondents to the national follow-up survey and not to all completers.
[2] Latest period for which information available.

Sources: YT Leavers database.
National follow-up survey.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 and 17-year-olds in Sunderland have been assessed as needing training in (1) word power and (2) number power in *(a)* 1990 and *(b)* 1991; and what is the latest available figure for 1992.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not available in the form requested.

Youth training entrants' needs are assessed by training providers. If trainees need to develop their literacy and numeracy skills and word power/number power is appropriate, the training provider will make it available as a matter of course.

The results of these assessments are not separately collated.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 and 17-year-olds in Sunderland have been assessed as needing special needs youth training scheme placements in *(a)* 1990 and *(b)* 1991; and what is the latest available figure for 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of school leavers assessed by the Careers Service as special needs in the Wearside training and enterprise council area in 1990-91 was 1,100. The figure for 1991-92 was 900. Figures for 1992-93 will not be available until late summer when all the young people concerned have left school and registered with the Careers Service.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many places are available on youth training schemes in Sunderland for *(a)* number power and *(b)* word power in (1) 1990 and (2) 1991; and what is the latest available figure for 1992.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The year 1992-93 is the first in which targets have been set by the Department for word power and number power. Wearside training and enterprise council has contracted to achieve 200 word power/number power certificates this financial year.

Figures for earlier years are not available.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many places were available for 16 and 17-year-olds in Sunderland on youth training schemes in (1) 1990, (2) 1991; and what is the latest figure for 1992.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department of Employment contracts with training and enterprise councils for provision of training weeks in youth training. The actual contracted training weeks figures for the years requested are:

	Numbers
1990-91	143,599
1991-92	157,790
1992-93	[1]142,150

[1] Profile.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many youth training scheme places there were for 16 and 17-year-olds in Sunderland for individuals with special needs in *(a)* 1990 and *(b)* 1991; and what is the latest available figure for 1992.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Unemployed young people are guaranteed an appropriate training opportunity in youth training. It follows that the number of special needs training places provided is consistent with demand. To date, Wearside training and enterprise council has met the guarantee to unemployed young people in its area.

The proportion of youth training entrants with special needs is approximately 30 per cent. In numerical terms provision of special needs training is estimated as:

	Number
1990-91	1,100
1991-92	1,070
1992-93	1,000

HOME DEPARTMENT

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many certificates have been issued under section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am aware of none so far as the Home Office is concerned.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the first degree obtained by the chief executive of the Fire Service College; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The chief executive holds no degree.

Criminal Injuries (Compensation)

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the guidelines relating to the reduction of an award by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board because of previous criminal convictions of the claimant.

Mr. Jack: The guide to the criminal injuries compensation scheme, a copy of which is sent to every applicant with the application form, sets out at paragraphs 37 to 39 the grounds on which an application may be rejected or an award abated because of the applicant's conduct or past criminal convictions. A copy of the guide is in the Library of the House. Decisions in individual cases are determined by the board in the light of all relevant circumstances.

Television Licences

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to amend the Wireless and Telegraphy Act 1949 to ensure that television sets can be used in prison cells without individual television licences being required.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice, The Way Ahead for the Prison Service in England and Wales" announced that carefully monitored experiments would be held in a small number of prisons to help determine whether and under what conditions there might be opportunities for televisions in cells.

The television licensing requirements is one of the issues currently being considered.

Mr. Lorrain Osman

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to delay the extradition of Mr. Lorrain Osman until he has met a delegation of hon. Members to discuss his case.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will suspend execution of his extradition warrant on Mr. Lorrain Osman until he has heard representations from a delegation of hon. Members who have expressed an interest in the case.

Mr. Jack: The Secretary of State signed the warrant ordering Mr. Osman's return on 15 June. Matters must now take their course.

C3 Division

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the terms of reference for C3 division of the Home Office.

Mr. Jack: The principal functions of C3 division are:
1. To assist Ministers in discharging the Home Secretary's duties and powers under the Mental Health Act 1983 and the Criminal Procedure (Insanity) Acts 1964 and 1991 in relation to offenders detained in psychiatric hospitals whose leave, transfer or discharge is subject to Home Office consent. To co-ordinate the development of policies designed to improve the response of the criminal justice system to mentally disordered offenders.
2. To assist Ministers in discharging the Home Secretary's responsibilities in relation to the royal prerogative of mercy and references to the Court of Appeal under section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 and the payment of compensation to persons wrongfully convicted; and to keep the law and practice relating to the investigation and correction of wrongful convictions under review.
3. To co-ordinate the Department's response to recent major miscarriage of justice cases, including the provision of evidence on these issues to the Royal Commission on criminal justice and the May inquiry and to advise on any further response which may be necessary.

Hoax Fire Calls

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, by fire service authority, the percentage of hoax fire calls attended during the last 12 months; and what the corresponding figures were for *(a)* 24 months, *(b)* 36 months and *(c)* 48 months ago.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 18 June 1992]:* The latest available information is for the years 1987 to 1990 and is shown in the table. It gives the percentage of total fire calls attended by local authority fire brigades which the brigades believed to be malicious false alarms.

The percentage of total fire calls that were malicious false alarms 1987 to 1990

Fire Brigade	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
UNITED KINGDOM	18·45	18·72	15·80	15·85
ENGLAND	18·86	18·89	15·78	15·55
Non-Metropolitan	14·50	14·31	12·01	12·10
Avon	12·94	13·81	12·08	11·97
Bedfordshire	15·16	14·17	11·82	10·76
Berkshire	10·19	9·97	8·91	8·94
Buckinghamshire	13·40	13·96	11·73	11·86
Cambridgeshire	14·84	14·47	12·53	11·28
Cheshire	15·75	12·96	12·00	11·81
Cleveland	34·97	35·96	30·76	28·45
Cornwall	6·41	7·49	4·74	5·53
Cumbria	13·56	13·19	12·42	12·54
Derbyshire	17·69	19·42	15·14	14·69
Devon	10·23	11·67	9·89	12·25
Dorset	7·51	8·48	6·17	7·77
Durham	22·69	23·76	19·63	22·64
East Sussex	9·89	10·62	9·32	8·96
Essex	15·15	15·16	12·33	11·24
Gloucestershire	11·22	11·79	11·30	13·70
Hampshire	7·44	7·13	5·35	5·53
Hereford and Worcester	12·10	13·97	12·05	13·02
Hertfordshire	10·70	10·23	9·07	8·54
Humberside	20·05	18·74	16·67	19·68
Isle of Wight	4·49	4·95	4·88	4·95
Kent	17·79	17·68	14·19	11·71
Lancashire	17·66	17·03	15·33	15·68
Leicestershire	19·66	19·66	17·27	16·40
Lincolnshire	18·06	16·11	14·69	14·74
Norfolk	11·68	9·59	8·90	7·91
North Yorkshire	10·75	11·30	8·62	8·99
Northamptonshire	12·03	13·00	9·11	8·15
Northumberland	13·79	12·82	8·64	11·35
Nottinghamshire	20·33	16·28	12·22	11·62
Oxfordshire	12·53	13·83	10·72	12·03
Shropshire	5·58	4·74	5·78	10·09
Somerset	5·27	7·31	5·80	6·82
Staffordshire	17·14	16·23	12·83	13·20
Suffolk	7·79	7·23	5·54	5·16
Surrey	12·44	10·76	8·85	8·51
Warwickshire	16·58	14·30	9·66	9·79
West Sussex	8·94	9·72	8·42	8·10
Wiltshire	9·31	8·96	8·21	7·86
Metropolitan	23·61	23·63	19·82	19·29
Greater Manchester	24·37	24·00	22·09	21·27
Merseyside	22·27	23·39	18·45	16·41
South Yorkshire	22·54	24·30	19·22	18·08
Tyne and Wear	21·89	25·22	21·18	21·49
West Midlands	28·44	26·97	21·06	19·95
West Yorkshire	24·92	26·59	21·78	19·87
Greater London	22·08	21·10	17·95	18·54
WALES	19·72	21·12	17·86	17·64
Clwyd	16·18	14·70	12·16	14·65
Dyfed	11·96	12·20	13·59	13·50
Gwent	22·81	23·89	20·78	20·79
Gwynedd	10·90	11·06	11·93	8·47
Mid Glamorgan	23·20	26·60	20·29	19·63
Powys	6·97	7·90	6·91	5·31
South Glamorgan	25·12	24·50	22·20	19·88
West Glamorgan	20·63	25·35	19·23	21·60
NORTHERN IRELAND	15·75	17·37	14·49	17·67
SCOTLAND	15·85	16·84	15·47	16·83
Strathclyde	17·17	18·98	17·36	18·14
Highland and Islands	4·70	5·90	4·96	6·43
Grampian	9·44	10·41	7·47	8·81
Tayside	8·62	9·26	11·13	13·10
Lothian and Borders	20·39	19·01	16·93	21·53
Fife	19·22	17·65	16·76	13·91
Central	14·87	18·46	17·13	16·05
Dumfries and Galloway	10·46	12·19	13·10	13·93

Bail Offenders

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will institute a full departmental inquiry into the serious crimes committed by persons on bail, following the case of Andrew Hagans, convicted at Bristol Crown court on 10 June.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 17 June 1992]:* Although I fully understand and share the concern that has been widely expressed about the implications of this case, I have no plans to institute any formal inquiry. I can assure the hon. Member, however, that lessons learnt from cases such as this are always taken into account in developing policy. Steps have already been taken and others are in train to reduce the risk of such incidents occurring again. They include, but are not limited to, the measures to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) referred in his statement on 25 February, *Official Report*, columns 813-14.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Fund

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what were the social fund allocations to individual DSS offices in Cumbria for each year since 1988;

(2) how many applications were made to the Barrow-in-Furness DSS office for *(a)* loans and *(b)* grants from the social fund in each year since 1988; and how many of these applications were successful;

(3) what was the total value of community care grants from the social fund made to applicants covered by the Barrow-in-Furness DSS office in each year since 1988.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the Library.

War Pension Claims

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for war pension on the basis, or partly on the basis, of psychiatric disability made between 1962 and 1980 were disallowed for the reason that the disability was not regarded as attributable to war service by virtue of its nature being a medical diagnosis of psychosis schizophrenia; in how many of such claims the refusal of pension or reduction in award has been reviewed in the light of his Department's acceptance of post-traumatic stress disorder as an accepted diagnosis leading to psychiatric disability; how many such reviews have led to war pension being paid in respect of such disability; and in how many such cases of successful review arrears of war pension, on the basis of such disability, have been paid for periods of disability prior to 1980.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the total cost of paying full arrears of war pension to those claimants now regarded as entitled by virtue of a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder calculating those arrears as from the date of their disability instead of from 1980.

Miss Widdecombe: Awards of war pension in respect of conditions accepted as attributable to service which could be described as "post-traumatic stress disorders"—for instance, conditions formerly diagnosed as "anxiety state" or neurasthenia—have normally been made from the date of claim. The date of 1980 for the payment of arrears of war pension is of significance only in so far as claims in respect of schizophrenia are concerned.

Child Benefit

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will amend the social security regulations to ensure that young people aged 16 and 17 years who cannot find a place on youth training schemes can have their entitlement to child benefit restored for that period during which they do not receive unemployment benefit or income support and that parents be allowed increased benefits geared to child benefits where appropriate.

Mr. Burt: No. The Government believe that the current provisions for young people provide appropriate support to those waiting for a youth training place. Parents of such young people can already get child benefit for up to 16 weeks after their children leave school. Young people who are seeking a YT place whose parents are themselves dependent on income support may be entitled to income support in their own right under the severe hardship provision.

Maxwell Group

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has set a target date for the return of Maxwell funds held in institutions abroad; and what action he is taking to bring this about.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 16 June at column *489*.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will make a statement on the conference held in Liechtenstein on 17 June on the Maxwell funds;

(2) if his Department was represented at the conference held in Liechtenstein on 19 June on the Maxwell funds; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department was not represented at the conference on Maxwell trusts which was held in Liechtenstein on 17 June, but which has been widely reported subsequently. It is primarily for the liquidators of the Maxwell investment management companies to establish the extent to which funds may have been transferred to Liechtenstein. However, where the special unit which we have established can make a useful contribution, it will do all it can to assist the liquidators, the trustees and others in securing the maximum return of assets to Maxwell pension funds.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he intends to meet ministers in Switzerland and Liechtenstein to discuss the return of Maxwell funds to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: We have no plans at present to meet Ministers in Liechtenstein or Switzerland to discuss disputed Maxwell pension fund assets.

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out the funding procedures for the emergency, short-term help for Maxwell pensioners he announced on 8 June.

Mr. Lilley: I announced on 8 June that the Government were making available temporary funding of £2·5 million, in the form of repayable grants to help ease the short-term pressures faced by Maxwell pensioners. Parliamentary approval of this new service will be sought in a supplementary estimate for class XIV Department of Social Security, vote 3. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £2·5 million will be met by repayable advances from the contingency fund.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average proportion of the 10 years prior to attaining state pension age spent in paid work by *(a)* and *(b)* women.

Miss Widdecombe: The 1991 labour force survey (GB) showed that 61·7 per cent. of men between the ages of 55

and 64, and 58·6 per cent. of women between the ages of 50 and 59, were in paid employment—paid employment is defined as a minimum of one hour per week. Further information in the form requested is available only at disproportionate cost.

HEALTH

Elderly Care Beds

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many care of the elderly beds were available in the Sunderland, Durham and Hartlepool health authorities each year since 1988.

Mr. Yeo: The information is given in the table.

The fall in number of elderly care beds during this period is due to the provision of better alternative community-based services provided by Sunderland, Durham and Hartlepool health authorities, in accordance with the initiatives outlined in the White Paper "Caring for People".

Northern Region
Average available beds for elderly patients (KHO3 Statistics)

	General elderly	*Mental illness elderly*	
		Short stay	*Long stay*
1987-88			
Durham	236	17	—
Sunderland	409	146	187
Hartlepool	158	3	21
1988-89			
Durham	184	35	—
Sunderland	380	59	304
Hartlepool	167	9	3
1989-90			
Durham	188	35	—
Sunderland	389	59	286
Hartlepool	155	9	3
1990-91			
Durham	182	18	17
Sunderland	384	59	193
Hartlepool	155	9	3
1991-92			
Durham	145	18	17
Sunderland	371	60	161
Hartlepool	153	9	3

Community Care (Funding)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will ring-fence the money allocated to communities under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990; and what criteria she will use to determine allocations.

Mr. Yeo: The Government have made it clear that if necessary they will use their powers in full to ensure that authorities do not misuse funds intended for community care. We are continuing to discuss with the local authority associations the funding of new community care arrangements.

Maternity Services

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide the current average cost to public funds of a normal birth at *(a)* hospital and *(b)* home.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available in the form requested.

The average cost of care during pregnancy and childbirth in the hospital and community health services in 1990-91 was £1,217 per birth. This includes obstetric in-patient and out-patient services and community midwifery but excludes services provided by general practitioners.

Cancer

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the percentage of the population who will develop cancer; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Statistical analysis of data relating to the period 1985 to 1987 suggests that approximately one third of the population of England and Wales will, at some point in their lives, be registered with a malignant cancer. More detailed data are published in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys publication "Cancer statistics: registrations 1986", series MB1 No. 19, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Anabolic Steroids

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action her Department is taking against those found or believed to be engaged in fraudulent import and trading of anabolic steroids; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Any reports of illegal importation or suspected illegal importation of anabolic steroids into the United Kingdom are urgently investigated by the enforcement unit of the Medicines Control Agency, as are reports of illegal trading in anabolic steroids.

Abortions

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the abortions performed under the new grounds and conditions created by the amendments to the Abortion Act 1967 by section 37 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1991 were performed after *(a)* 24 weeks and *(b)* 28 weeks.

Mr. Sackville: In the period 1 April 1991 to 30 September 1991, the latest date for which figures are available, a total of 32 abortions were performed in Great Britain after 24 weeks' gestation. Of these, seven were performed after 28 weeks' gestation.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what reports of inspections carried out by local health authority inspectors of private clinics providing abortions are received by her Department; and if she will publish them.

Mr. Sackville: Reports of health authority inspections are retained locally.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the complication rate associated with abortions

conducted at each of the private abortion clinics; and what was the national complication rate for each of the years *(a)* 1988, *(b)* 1989, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1991.

Mr. Sackville: Aggregated details of complications are included on the abortion notification form sent to the chief medical officer and are published on an England and Wales basis in tables 16 and 17 of the "Annual Abortion Statistics"—series AB No. 15 (1988), No. 16 (1989) and No. 17 (1990), published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys—copies of which are available in the Library. The 1991 information is not yet available. The complication rates in places approved under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967 are monitored by the Department, but information about individual places is not published.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many NHS hospitals are currently using macerators to dispose of the remains of pre-born children;

(2) how many health authorities have complied with guidelines issued to them by her Department regarding the disposal of pre-born children and their remains.

Mr. Sackville: I am not aware that any hospitals are currently using macerators for the purpose in question. The guidance issued by the Department to the NHS in November last year requires that the use of maceration and sluicing methods of disposal should cease by no later than 1 January 1992. Additional guidance on the sensitive disposal of the dead fetus and fetal tissue was issued to the NHS in December 1991. Compliance with this guidance is a matter for individual health authorities.

Copies of the guidance are available in the Library.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the reports compiled by inspectors from her Department regarding the private clinics providing abortion inspected by them.

Mr. Sackville: No. These reports contain confidential information.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all places currently approved under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967 together with the names of their proprietors and any company name associated with their clinic or advice agency together with the names of any company directors.

Mr. Sackville: A list of places currently approved under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967, together with the names of their proprietors, is held in the Library. Information about related companies and directors' names is provided to the Department on a "commercial in confidence" basis and cannot therefore be disclosed.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines on the counselling of mothers before and after abortion are issued by her Department; whether these are binding on the NHS and private clinics; what checks are conducted to ensure the quality of counselling; and if she will place a copy of such guidelines in the Library.

Mr. Sackville: Guidance on arrangements for counselling women seeking abortion was issued in 1977—circular HC(77)26—to the national health service and places approved under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967. This remains current and a copy is available in the Library. Compliance in the NHS is a matter for individual health authorities. In the private sector, counselling arrangements are checked by the Department's officials in the course of their regular unannounced inspection visits to places approved under the Abortion Act 1967.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her policy regarding the institution of a system to record the actual handicap suffered by a pre-born child aborted on grounds of disability.

Mr. Sackville: The notification form for each abortion requires the operating practitioner to state the main medical condition for the abortion. Ground E of the Abortion Act 1967, as amended, allows an abortion where there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped. In such cases, there is a requirement to provide on the notification form information about the condition of the woman, and the fetus. Additionally, where abortions take place after 24 weeks' gestation, a full statement of the medical condition of the fetus is required.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if her Department receives copies of the annual reports and accounts of the companies that provide abortion in private clinics together with the reports and accounts of any parent or subsidiary companies.

Mr. Sackville: No.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is issued by her Department on the definitions of substantial risk and seriously handicapped in the grounds under which a pre-born child may be aborted for disability; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Decisions as to what constitutes "substantial risk" and "seriously handicapped" within the grounds specified in the Abortion Act 1967 are matters for the clinical judgment of the doctor concerned, taking account of the facts and circumstances of each case.

Food Safety

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure that residents are not denied the therapeutic or rehabilitative benefit of participation in catering and domestic tasks in residential homes for elderly people as a result of the application of regulations consequent on the Food Safety Act 1970.

Mr. Sackville: Nobody in residential or sheltered accommodation is precluded from taking part in the preparation of food. The Food Hygiene (General) Regulations 1970, as amended, set out the controls necessary for the hygienic preparation of food. Environmental health departments advise on controls bearing in mind the nature of any food safety risk, including the type of food handled and the preparation involved.

DEFENCE

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all those functions and areas in his Department and associated agencies that have been identified for market testing in the wake of the White Paper "Competing for Quality".

Mr. Aitken: The Department's policy is that all defence support functions should be performed by the private sector unless there are overriding and clearly proven operational reasons for retaining them in-house, or definite value-for-money advantages. Our market testing programme therefore extends across all areas of the Department and its agencies.

Ministry Police

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the operational support unit of the Ministry of Defence police was moved to RAF Wethersfield.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The operational support unit moved to Wethersfield on Friday 1 May 1992 as planned.

Redundancy

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the rights to redundancy payments of soldiers in *(a)* the British Army and *(b)* each of the armies of the other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation member states.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Soldiers made redundant with less than 22 years, but at least 12 years service from age 18, will receive an immediate pension calculated as a proportion of the 22 years rate based on their length of service and rank held. They will also receive a tax-free terminal grant of three times the annual rate of pension. In addition, special capital payments of up to 18 months' pay are also payable, related to the length of service and annual rate of pay. These payments are also tax free.

Soldiers with less than 12 years' service will receive a special capital payment of up to 19 months' pay based on their years of completed service and annual pay. If they have more than two years' service, they will also be awarded a preserved pension and terminal grant of three times the rate of pension payable at age 60.

My Department has little information on redundancy payments made to the forces of the other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation member states. Many of the European nations have conscript armies. In the American army, I understand redundancy payments are made to service personnel with between six and 18 years' service. Payment equates to one tenth of the annual basic salary for each completed year of service, and is taxable. Service of less than 20 years does not qualify for any form of pension. Personnel with 20 or more years service receive a pension. Anyone with 18 years of service is allowed to serve on to the 20-year point to qualify for a pension.

Army Pay

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the basic annual pay of a soldier of the rank *(a)* private, *(b)* corporal, *(c)* sergeant, *(d)* second lieutenant, *(e)* captain, *(f)* colonel, *(g)* major general and *(h)* field marshal in (i) the British Army and (ii) each of the armies of the other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation member states.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Tables of annual pay rates for members of the armed forces are contained in the 21st report of the review body on armed forces pay, Cm 1815, for ranks up to brigadier, and the 14th report on top salaries, Cm 1413, for ranks above brigadier. The Government have implemented in full the recommendations contained in both reports. The Ministry of Defence does not have equivalent figures for the armies of other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation member states.

WALES

Abortions

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total number of abortions performed in Wales under the Abortion Act 1967 since its implementation; and how many and what percentage of these abortions were performed in emergency to save the life of the mother.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The total number of abortions performed in Wales and notified under the Abortion Act 1967 in the period since its implementation until the end of September 1991, which is the latest date for which information is available, was 83,015. Of these, seven were performed in emergency to save the life of the woman; this represents 0·008 per cent. of the total.
Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Fisheries Byelaws

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he now expects to approve the draft sea fisheries byelaws for north Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Following receipt of the proposed byelaws in 1991, consideration by the Department and discussions with the promoters identified the need for some modifications. The promoters have recently submitted revised versions of the byelaws, which are now being considered before a final decision is made.

Community Charge

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the numbers of people charged and prosecuted for non-payment of the community charge so far.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is not held centrally.

Homelessness

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the number of homeless people in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: During the quarter October to December 1991, there were 5,550 people in households accepted as homeless by local authorities under part III of the Housing Act 1985.

Beef Industry

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the prospects for the beef industry in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government recognise the difficult conditions that have faced the beef sector in recent years and have introduced a number of measures designed to assist specialist beef producers. At the EC level, intervention policies have proved a costly and inefficient method of supporting the beef industry. That is why, in our negotiations to reform the common agricultural policy, we insisted on resources being switched away from intervention mechanism and towards more direct aid for producers. I am confident that those forms of support will help the beef industry in Wales to meet the changing demands of the marketplace.

Set-aside Scheme

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of set-aside acreages in each of the counties of Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

	5 year scheme acres	*1 year scheme acres*
Clwyd	303·20	Nil
Dyfed	2,655·29	54·36
Mid Glamorgan	Nil	85·40
South Glamorgan	335·82	Nil
West Glamorgan	483·05	Nil
Gwent	856·31	Nil
Gwynedd	217·53	Nil
Powys	385·29	95·37
Total	5,236·49	235·13

The one-year set-aside scheme ends on 31 August 1992.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the figures on a county basis in Wales for 1991-92 of *(a)* the number of serious irregularities of the set-aside scheme, *(b)* the number of minor breaches of the scheme and *(c)* the number of cases where payments were withheld in full or in part; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Information to date for the 1991-92 set-aside year, which ends in September is as follows:

(a) Serious irregularities—nil
(b) Minor breaches—one (in Dyfed)
(c) Payments withheld—no claims have yet been submitted.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the amount of payments under the set-aside scheme in Wales which have been recovered or withheld in each region in 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Claims for the 1991-92 set-aside year have not yet been submitted. Recoveries relating to 1990-91 payments amount so far to £1,431·40. The recoveries all arose from the exercise by farmers of the option to change from permanent fallow to another category of set-aside.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many farmers have received payments under the set-aside scheme in 1991 in each county in Wales for *(a)* horse-based activities, *(b)* golf courses, *(c)* game cover for commercial shoots, *(d)* sports grounds, *(e)* other recreational facilities and *(f)* other uses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The numbers of farmers in Wales who received payments for the set-aside scheme year 1990-91 for non-agricultural use are as follows:

	Dyfed	*Gwynedd*	*Powys*	*Gwent*	*West Glamorgan*	*Clwyd*
a Horse-based activities	4	Nil	1	1	2	1
b Golf courses	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1
c Game cover	Nil	Nil	1	Nil	Nil	Nil
d Sports grounds	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
e Other recreational facilities	Nil	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
f Other	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Totals	5	1	2	1	2	2

Upland Areas

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new measures he proposes to assist the upland communities of Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department, together with other organisations, including the Welsh Development Agency, the Development Board for Rural Wales and the Wales tourist board, provides significant resources for the development of the economic, social and environmental fabric of our upland communities and to secure for them the long-term prosperity which is the common objective of us all. I will continue to review my policies in response to identified demands.

Farming Accidents

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the number of accidents and fatalities in the farming industry for each of the last three years.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures are shown in the table:

Injuries to employees[1] in agriculture[2] in Wales reported to the Health and Safety Executive's factory and agricultural inspectorates

Year[3]	*Severity of injury*			
	Fatal	*Major*[4]	*Over 3 days*[5]	*Total*
1988-89	—	21	82	103
1989-90	1	23	83	107
1990-91	1	25	53	79

Source: Health and Safety Executive.

[1] Including trainees.
[2] SIC Division 0 (Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing).
[3] Commencing 1 April.
[4] As defined under the Reporting of Injury, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.
[5] Injuries which do not fit the criteria for "major" but which result in the absence of the employee from work for more than three days.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many enterprise zones exist in Wales; what were their dates of creation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: There are three enterprise zones in Wales:

Zone	*Date of designation*
Delyn	21 July 1983
Milford Haven Waterway	24 April 1984
Lower Swansea Valley No. 2	6 March 1983

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of jobs existing on each of the Welsh enterprise zones.

Mr. David Hunt: The most recent official estimates of employment in enterprise zones relate to December 1989. Employment in the zones in Wales was estimated to be:

Lower Swansea Valley (zones 1 and 2)—4,200.
Delyn—2,600.
Milford Haven Waterway—2,100.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the full cost and benefits of each of the enterprise zones including tax and capital allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Costs and benefits are not calculated for individual enterprise zones. An interim evaluation of the enterprise zone scheme was carried out by consultants and the results were published in 1987. A copy of that report was placed in the Library. A final evaluation of the scheme is in progress.

The Department of the Environment also publishes, on an annual basis, "Enterprise Zone Information". Copies of that document are also placed in the Library.

Hospital Trusts

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the numbers and grades of officials in his Department who are involved specifically with hospital trust applications, indicating whether they are wholly or partly engaged on this work.

Mr. David Hunt: Six full-time staff work specifically on NHS trust issues:

	Number
Grade 7	[1]3
Higher Executive Officer	1
Executive Officer	1
Administrative Officer	1

[1] Including two NHS secondees.

Other officials across the Department provide input as appropriate.

Sign Language Services

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will assist the Welsh counties and the Wales Council for the Deaf to set up sign language interpreting services in Wales at least equal to those applying in England.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The promotion of training and the conduct of examinations in communication skills for deaf people, including sign language interpreting, are carried out by the Council for the Advance of Communication with Deaf People, a voluntary organisation set up for that purpose. The number of trained interpreters has increased rapidly over the past 10 years, and although available services tend to be centred on the main centres of population such as London and Manchester, they are gradually spreading to other parts, including Wales. The examinations conducted by CACDP, based at the university of Durham, are open to people from Wales. CACDP has worked in conjunction with Wales Council for the Deaf, and there should therefore be no need to set up a separate organisation in Wales.

In recognition of the importance of developing sign language interpreting services in Wales, and to aid that process, Wales Council for the Deaf has also been awarded £141,264 in grant aid for the 1992-93 financial year, part of which is to fund a sign language communications project.

Food Safety

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to ensure that disabled people in Wales or Welsh people who have experienced serious injury or illness are not precluded from the therapeutic or rehabilitative benefit of participation in catering and domestic tasks in residential homes as a result of the application of regulations consequent on the Food Safety Act 1990.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Food Safety Act does not prohibit anyone in residential or sheltered accommodation from preparing their own meals or beverages. However, the Food Hygiene (General) Regulations 1970, as amended, set out the controls necessary for the hygienic preparation of food other than in domestic settings. Environmental health departments advise on controls bearing in mind the nature of any food safety risk, including the type of food handled and the preparation involved. Residents may assist staff in the kitchen if the hygiene controls can be satisfied.

Economic Forum for Wales

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to establish the planned Economic Forum for Wales; and if he will be publishing a White Paper.

Mr. David Hunt: A consultation paper seeking views on how the council would operate will be issued in the near future.

Disabling Conditions (Treatment)

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to reduce the waiting time for treatment of specific disabling conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I intend to strengthen and extend the guarantees in the patients charter for Wales by introducing two additional guarantees, which will take effect from 1 April 1993.

No patient in Wales will have to wait more than 18 months for a hip or knee replacement or cataract operation. Those conditions can reduce the quality of life and merit priority attention. I shall expect health authorities in Wales to make full use of the services provided by the treatment centres that I have established to ensure that that commitment is met.

I shall also introduce a guarantee that no patient in Wales will have to wait longer than one month for urgent in-patient or day case treatment. This is already a management target to which health authorities are committed.

In order to assist authorities in Wales to achieve the patients charter guarantees, additional funding of £1 million will be made available to district health authorities and to GP fund holders, through family health authorities under the 1992-93 waiting times initiative.

Ysgol Derwyn School

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will review his financial allocations in order that the Ysgol Derwyn CP school, Higher Kinnerton might extend the number of classrooms and eliminate the need for temporary classrooms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: No. It is for local authorities to determine the distribution of resources made available to them between services and projects in the light of their view of local needs and priorities.

Council House Sales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will allow Alyn and Deeside council to use the capital receipts it has retained from the sale of council housing.

Mr. David Hunt: The legislation does not allow the release of receipts already set aside to meet credit liabilities except where a council has no overall debt, nor do I believe it would be right to do so. It is prudent financial management that a proportion of the receipts from council house sales should reduce debt incurred in construction. As at 31 March 1991, Alyn and Deeside had total debt of £32·97 million, of which £22·27 million was council housing—housing revenue account—debt.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Turkey

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to make any representations to the Government of Turkey concerning the initiation of political dialogue with the Kurds of north-west Turkey; what recent reports he has received about the treatment of Kurds in Turkey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed human rights issues with the Turkish Foreign Minister during his visit to Turkey in April. We welcome Prime Minister Demirel's recognition of a Kurdish identity and his Government's intention to make human rights improvements a top priority. We look forward to the early implementation of the Government's programme of democratic and human rights reform.

Thailand

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what provisions are being made by Her Majesty's Government for proper legal representation for British subjects facing trial in Thailand.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British embassy in Bangkok, like British embassies and consular posts elsewhere, ensures that British nationals who are detained understand how to obtain legal representation. The embassy holds an up-to-date list of English-speaking lawyers, which is offered to all British detainees.

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps were taken by British consular officials to draw the attention of the Thai courts to Ms Cahill's juvenile British legal status at the time of sentencing.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Thai authorities were aware of Miss Cahill's age. She was tried and sentenced in a juvenile court. The British embassy has strongly supported her petition for a royal pardon on the grounds of her youth and immaturity at the time the offence was committed.

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are currently being made by Her Majesty's Government in support of the British women, Patricia Cahill and Kathryn Smith, imprisoned in Thailand.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our embassy in Bangkok has submitted to the Thai authorities petitions from both girls for a royal pardon. The embassy gave both petitions strong support.

Each month a member of staff of the embassy visits the girls. With money provided by family, friends and Prisoners Abroad, our embassy helps them with the purchase of food, cosmetics, toiletries and so on. Our embassy also provides books and magazines and has arranged for vaccinations.

Slovenia

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effect of United Nations' sanctions against Serbia on Slovenia's tourist trade; and what restrictions have been placed on payments to Slovenian hoteliers or the Slovenian national airline Adria.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have made no specific assessment of the impact on the Slovenian tourist industry of United Nations sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro. There are, however, no prohibitions on payments to Slovenian hoteliers or the Slovenian national airline.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is being offered to the newly independent country of Slovenia to provide services for the refugees arriving from Croatia and Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The relief effort in all the former Yugoslav republics, much of it involving assistance to refugees, is being led by the United Nations humanitarian agencies and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Since last November the United Kingdom has given £9·7 million for its work.

Entry Clearance Officers

Mr. Madden: to ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has for reducing the establishment of entry clearance officers in British posts in the Indian sub-continent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The staffing complement at posts in the Indian sub-continent is reviewed annually on the basis of demand for entry clearances. A slow-down in the number of people applying, coupled with increased operational efficiency, may lead to possible savings, but final decisions have yet to be taken. Any reductions will be phased in and will not adversely affect waiting times for settlement applicants or the ability of the post to offer a same-day service to genuine visit visa applicants.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has for deploying entry clearance officers to British posts in the Russian federation and other states in each and central Europe; how many entry clearance officers are now in post in those countries; and what establishment in each country he proposes.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are four entry clearance officers at the British embassy in Moscow.

An entry clearance section will be established at the consulate-general in St. Petersburg as soon as suitable accommodation is available. We are considering what services our embassy in Alma Ata, to open this autumn, should provide. We will open an entry clearance section at the embassy in Kiev as soon as an office can be located.

Nationals of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania travelling on national passports do not require visas for short visits to the United Kingdom. There are no visa-issuing facilities currently at our posts at Riga, Tallinn or Vilnius.

Nationals of the states of what was fomerly Yugoslavia do not require visas for short visits to the United Kingdom. Entry clearances can already be obtained from the embassy at Belgrade. Consideration will be given to the establishment of an entry clearance section at Ljubljana when we open an embassy there.

There are three entry clearance officers in Bucharest and one at each of the embassies in Belgrade, Budapest, Prague and Sofia. Following the abolition of the visa requirement for Poles, the number of full-time entry clearance officers at Warsaw will be reduced from six to two over the coming months.

Persons who require visas for the United Kingdom and who reside in a country where we do not have an entry clearance section may apply to any British visa-issuing office.

Rudolf Hess

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his present estimate of the date of release of remaining Foreign Office files FO/1093 (pieces 1 to 5) on the Rudolf Hess case to the Public Record Office.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The second batch of the Hess files in the FO 1093 series should be released to the Public Record Office in early July.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now release the files relating to Rudolf Hess for the period since the Nuremburg trials.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: All Foreign and Commonwealth Office files relating to Rudolf Hess for the period since the Nuremberg trials and up to 1961 are now open at the Public Record Office. Records since 1962 will be released as provided for in the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967, 30 years after their creation.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 15 June.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I represented the United Kingdom at the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 15 June.

The Council discussed the Commission's future financing proposals. As at the Economic and Finance Council on 9 June, a large number of member states expressed serious doubts about the Commission package. The Council had a brief discussion on the administrative arrangements for the proposed new Committee of the Regions established under the treaty on European union. Ministers also discussed preparations for the European Council in Lisbon on 26 and 27 June.

The Council considerd a communication on Community relations with Japan and adopted conclusions outlining the Community's approach. Ministers issued a declaration on Yugoslavia supporting the United Nations initiative to re-open Sarajevo airport to allow humanitarian help into Bosnia-Herzegovina. They also endorsed Lord Carrington's continuing peace efforts in Bosnia and urged restraint on Serbs, Albanians and Kosovars to defuse the situation in Kosovo.

The Council discussed the development of the Community's relations with the Maghreb and agreed that permanent representatives should examine the question further. The Council considered the Swiss application to join the Community and agreed to refer the application to the Commission for its opinion.

Vietnamese Migrants

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Vietnamese migrants.

Mr. Goodlad: On 19 June, 38 Vietnamese illegal immigrants were repatriated from Hong Kong to Vietnam on the first flight under the final stage of the orderly repatriation programme. The operation, which was carried out in accordance with international practice, went smoothly.

The group comprised migrants who had arrived in Hong Kong before 29 October 1991. All had undergone the full screening and appeal procedure vetted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and been found not to be refugees.

Since the orderly repatriation programme was announced on 29 October 1991, there has been a dramatic drop in the number of arrivals in Hong Kong, accompanied by a surge in applications for voluntary repatriation. We hope that most of the non-refugees still in Hong Kong will now volunteer to return. Already, more than 20,000 non-refugees have returned to Vietnam from the region without a single substantiated case of persecution.

It does no service to the genuine refugee to classify him among those who are merely seeking a better life abroad. The clearing of the Hong Kong camps will enable genuine refugees to be properly looked after and resettled as appropriate.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Alternative Energy

Mr. Etherington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all alternative energy projects receiving grants from his Department by *(a)* level of grant, *(b)* institution or body administering the grant and *(c)* date of completion.

Mr. Eggar: Given the number of such projects receiving grants from my Department, I shall write to the hon. Member with the list he requests and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Protective Equipment

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether, if a product passses the relevant European standard under the personal protective equipment directive, the product automatically complies with the directive even if the committee working on the standard has widened the scope for more products to be exempt.

Mr. Sainsbury: The personal protective equipment directive (89/686/EEC) lays down certain requirements and specifies categories of equipment to which they apply. The relevant European standards-making body is drawing up standards for manufacturers to follow, as part of compliance procedures. The scope of the directive cannot be altered by the technical committee drawing on these standards, but only by the EC Council.

RECHAR

Mr. Cummings: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement relating to the distribution of RECHAR moneys in East Durham.

Mr. Sainsbury: East Durham is part of the Durham RECHAR programme area, which has been allocated £8·7 million of RECHAR grants for 1992 and 1993. The programme is now under way. A seminar was held for prospective applicants and a first round of applications has been invited for 26 June. A programme monitoring committee, chaired by an official of my Department, will be responsible for the selection of projects to receive grants. The committee will be formally constituted on 25 June.

EC Structural Funds

Ms. Quin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his Department's position in the discussions with EC Industry Ministers in Lisbon on 15 May concerning the future of EC structural funds.

Mr. Sainsbury: I represented the United Kingdom at the informal meeting of EC Regional Policy Ministers which took place in Lisbon on 15 and 16 May. As this was an informal meeting, no decisions were taken. Discussion concentrated on a number of issues which will be central to the review of the structural funds regulations—due to take place by the end of 1993—notably the simplification of administrative procedures and the application of the principles of programming, partnership and subsidiarity.

Japanese Cars

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the proposal from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission concerning voluntary restraints on imports of Japanese-built cars.

Mr. Sainsbury: The existing voluntary restraint on imports of Japanese cars agreed between the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders and its Japanese counterpart will be discontinued at the end of this year in accordance with the agreement between the EC and Japan concluded last year, known as "The Elements of Consensus". It is open to the Government to decide whether the United Kingdom should be a restricted market from 1 January 1993 for the purposes of the implementation of this agreement. I expect to take a decision on this matter before the end of this year.

Energy Tax

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations he has had with his counterparts in the European Commission responsible for energy policy concerning the carbon/energy tax proposals agreed by the Commission at its meeting on 13 May; what proposals he has for its implementation at United Kingdom level; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: While the general issue of energy/carbon taxation has been discussed at a number of Councils, including the Energy Council, the proposals which the Commission has recently agreed have not yet been formally issued to member states. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is responsible for taxation in the United Kingdom, will take the lead in responding to the proposals when they have been received and carefully considered.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he proposes to review the policy instruments by which regional assistance to industry is delivered; if he will co-ordinate such a review with the assisted areas map review he announced on 9 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Regional policy instruments are kept under continuing review.

Mr. Morgan To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultation he has had with the Director General of

Electricity Supply regarding alterations of *(a)* the regulatory price mechanisms for the regional electricity companies for England and Wales and *(b)* the 1998 limit for the loss of franchise over domestic and small customers by the regional electricity companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I meet the Director General of Electricity Supply from time to time and discuss matters of mutual interest.

The price control conditions in the public electricity supply licences are subject to modification as provided for in the Electricity Act 1989 and those licences. The franchise restrictions, and their expiry in 1998, remain as provided for in second-tier supply licences.

National Grid Company

Mr. Rhodri Morgan To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has had regarding the statutory restrictions on the sale or flotation of the National Grid Company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have received no such representations.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Tony Banks To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the annual Government expenditure on research and development for renewable energy sources since 1979-80; and what are the provisional estimates for expenditure in 1992-93 and 1993-94 expressed in money terms and at 1991-92 prices.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 18 June 1992]:* For 1979-80 to 1989-90, I refer the hon. Member to the reply on 21 November 1991, *Official Report*, columns *260-62*. Outturn expenditure under the renewables energy budget for 1991 was £0·6 million higher than the estimated provision for that year of £24·0 million. Provision for 1992-93 is £24·3 million—£23·1 million in 1991-92 prices. Expenditure for 1993-94 will be determined in the course of the public expenditure survey exercise.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

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8th June—19th June 1992

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

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Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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